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["LET ME LOOK AT YOUR HAND," SAID THE HUSSAR, "AND I WILL TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE!"]

ROSAMOND'S HUSBAND.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND Lord Kingsford drove home, and ate his dinner in solitary state, for Tommy was now despatched to bed at a very early hour; and as he smoked his cigar, pacing the avenue in the moonlight, his mind was entirely taken up with his long interview that same afternoon with Rosamond. Every word, every look, he recalled again and again. At least she was constant to him in one way. She would never marry, nay, though he had dangled the bait of a coronet before her eyes, and that is a bauble that dazzles most young ladies.

How furious she had been when she sprang up the steps, and how incredulous about Tommy's mother. Once this visit of Tommy's to the south was over he would fight with fate no longer; he would claim Rosamond, unnatural mother though she was. Artful actress, there was something about her that drew him towards her, despite of all. He would rather

have her little finger than all the rest of the women in the world put together. Her look, her touch, her voice had power to thrill every fibre of his heart—a power which no other living being ever could, would, or should possess. He was nearly revealing himself; his heart was for once on the eve of overmastering his head, and his heart was ultimately to carry the day.

She had successfully withstood one test—rank, and ere he restored her to favour, he meant to try her by another—poverty.

He stood in the avenue, his cigar between his lips, his eyes fixed on the woods of Violet Hill, just visible across the valley.

"Little do our good neighbours know that the roof over these shelters the mistress of Armine Court," he said to himself with a smile, "and a very good mistress she will make too," glancing at the pile behind him. "I wish I was as certain she would be a good mother—but," tossing his cigar into the grass with a sigh, "as she said herself to-day no one could be cruel to Tommy; and, after all," now putting his hands in his pockets as he slowly sauntered towards the open window of the

dining-room. "Tommy and I must only take our chance."

And time went by. Tommy is completely restored to health, and he has been left in charge of a friend of Allan's—a mature old dowager, Lady Greville, who has a grandson of his age, whilst his father takes his horses up to Leicestershire and has some hunting, but he has not come for hunting alone. He knows that the Brands have taken a small hunting-box near Melton Mowbray, and that there are no more constant "followers," than Colonel Brand and Miss Dane. He has not seen them yet. He has got stabling for his nags, and is putting up at the Queen's Head Hotel along with at least fifteen other hunting men.

The first day he was out was wet—no Rosamond, no rheumatic Colonel Brand—but they had a good day's sport, nevertheless, and Allan came home in very fair spirits. He had opened some of their eyes that day and no mistake. He was the only man out, except the first whip, who got over "Annerley Brook," flooded to the brim with a good eighteen feet of water.

After a tub, and changing his wet hunting things for dry clothes, Allan descended to the coffee-room quite ready for his dinner.

He was late—they were already at the soup and sherry, and conversation was both loud and brisk. At first it turned upon the day's run, and not a few curious eyes were fixed upon the dark, good-looking stranger, who took his place without shyness, and called for his soup.

He was a flyer, and no mistake—a regular first-flight man, come up, they heard, from the Oakley pack, to ride their heads off. All very fine when a man rode horses like his—animals worth from two to four hundred guineas—but the beggar could ride. They must confess there was no flinching about him.

This they had been discussing in a little knot before the fire previous to dinner, and it had been rumoured that he was not Mr. Kingsford as stated, but Lord Kingsford.

"Crabbie Crawford knows him," said a little foxy-faced gentleman, "but Crabbie is dining out—Crabbie is nothing if he is not a society man."

Despite of Crabbie's absence the stranger got on very well. He was a true sportsman, modest about his own exploits, enthusiastic about hunting, and by the time dinner was half over he was as much at home with everybody as if he had lived among them for the last month.

After a time the talk veered round to the fair sex. In this topic the new arrival took no sort of interest, but kept chattering on with another hunting maniac about "cubs and earth-stoppers."

However, at last, the introduction of one name caused him to pause and, so to speak, prick up his ears.

"What became of Miss Dane to-day?" inquired a light-haired young man, in a rather anxious tone of voice.

"She wasn't out to show us all the way, as she did on Friday," responded an elderly gentleman. "I daresay she'll get a bit slack in hunting now that she has other fish to fry—now—grinning—that she's going to be married."

At this announcement the stranger, who had been hitherto carefully selecting a head of celery to eat with his cheese, thrust it back into the glass bowl, and fixed his eyes upon the bearded man with a look of angry interrogation.

"Ah, I see you know her," he rejoined, complacently, in answer to this look. "She's a monstrous pretty girl, is she not? Just rides like a bird!"

"Who—who—is she going to marry?" asked her husband, bringing out the words with difficulty.

"He has been hard hit, too," thought the other. "Oh, to the great part down here. A very good chap, Somers, elderly though, not suitable as to age, but any quantity of money, and that's the main thing."

"But she has money of her own."

"Pooh! a mere drop in the bucket, my dear sir! This man has seventy thousand pounds a year. He is a kind of Silver King in his way."

"But I did not hear that it was settled yet, Boyce," cried a cheery voice from lower down the table. "Never say die, old man! give us all a chance yet!"

This was pleasant for Allan to hear his wife's name bandied about in this fashion. He must see her, speak to her, and put a stop to this at any cost.

"Well, I don't know what you will settled," drawled the other, facetiously. "I can only say that I saw her on his coach yesterday, on the box-seat. That generally means business."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed the man at the foot of the table, contemptuously. "If every woman you saw on the box-seat was bound to marry the coachman, it would be a nice state of affairs."

"Campbell, my dear boy," said the bearded one in a paternal manner, "you may as well

give her up gracefully. We all know she's an uncommonly pretty girl, not a bit loud or fast, and a first-rate horsewoman. Any one of us would be proud to claim her, but this heavy weight—this seventy thousand pounds—clears the course and handicaps us all. Cheer up, cheer up! you're o'er young to marry yet. I wouldn't hear of it."

At this crisis the latest comer pushed his chair back without any preamble or apology, got up, and walked out of the room.

"Hullo! hullo! has the dinner disagreed with our flyer?" said the foxy-faced one, with a grin.

"I don't know about the dinner, can give no opinion about that, not being on familiar terms with his digestive organs, but I can tell you what has not suited him nor his mental digestion—the conversation about Miss Dane."

"Whew! sets the wind in that quarter? I wonder if she is any relation?"

"His sister, or his cousin, or his aunt," said the facetious one. "Maybe he has gone to hunt up a second, and call us out one by one."

He had not gone to do anything of the kind. He had gone out to the stables to see the two horses he had out that day get their bucket of groat apiece, and be bedded down. To sit at table and hear Miss Dane's name bandied about from lip to lip, to listen to speculations about the marriage of his wife, was rather too much to stand.

He had felt inclined to go round to the jolly-looking fellow with the black beard and knock him down, but still he asked himself quite coolly, once he had soothed his feelings with a cigar—

"Why the deuce should he? How were any of these cheery bachelors to know that Miss Dane's husband was sitting at the table?"

No, no; it was just as well for him, all things considered, that he had kept a quiet tongue in his head and not made a fool of himself, ardently as he had longed to throw a plate at his opposite neighbour. He had wisely repressed this savage idea, and behaved with the discretion befitting his nine-and-twenty years.

Certainly things had come to a crisis, and Rosamond must at length be told. He meant to tell her, but not quite, quite so soon. What ever happened he hoped she had not precipitated herself into an engagement with this Cressus. That would involve the tangled skein still further, and, bad as matters were, he saw very distinctly that they might still be worse.

CHAPTER XXV.

"There's to be a grand fancy masked ball at a country house about five miles from this to-morrow," said Crabbie Campbell, button-holing Lord Kingsford late one evening in the smoking-room. "Everyone for counties round is going. I've leave to bring a friend. Will you come? Don't say no if you'd rather say yes."

Everyone! That would of course include Rosamond. Yes, he thought he would like to go. He was dying to see her, and in a fancy dress and a mask he would say a few things to her that he dare not in his present character.

"But I've not got any fancy kit!" he objected, after a pause.

"Oh, don't let that stand in your way. Nathan, from London, has sent a boxful down on hire, all sorts and sizes, and you can suit yourself to the masthead."

"All right then, I'll go. I suppose we don't give our names?"

"No, not till two o'clock—supper-time—when everyone unmask; and it's no end of fun! Such surprises people get! There are no end of larks to be had, especially if you know who some of the girls are, and what they mean to wear, as I do!" triumphantly.

"Ah! Of course you mean to pass your information on to me?" said his friend with prompt decision.

"Well, if mum is the word, I don't mind if I do. You see I'm rather sweet on two or

three—a Miss Stewart, a Miss Falls, and Miss Glen."

"Is that all?" said the other, ironically. "I know Miss Glen. What is she going to appear in?"

"Oh, the Queen of the Fairies. No less and no more, and her friend is going as—what's this?—let me see," rubbing his forehead meditatively. "Oh, I've got it now, an Austrian Chanoinesse, and they are both to wear long white dominoes, with red stars on the right shoulder."

"You seem to have it all very pat! Pray how did you find out?"

"Oh easily enough!" exultantly. "I merely tipped the ladies' maid, and she tipped me, the straight one," laughing boisterously at his own joke.

Lord Kingsford listened attentively to the particulars of some other ladies' toilettes to disarm suspicion, but made particular note of the white domino and star in his own mind, and of course there'll be no difficulty in finding out Rosamond, as she is a good half head the taller of the two.

The next evening beheld him dressed in the very splendid uniform of an Austrian Hussar, and most becoming it proved to his slight figure, as his man remarked to himself when his master, taking up mask and gloves, and throwing a top-coat over his arm, hurried downstairs quickly, in answer to various shouts of "Come along, Kingsford," from the hall, where half-a-dozen strange figures were assembled, notably, a French clown, who was jumping about and putting all manner of queer capers for the benefit of the assembled company.

There was a long-haired cavalier, rather uneasy about his wig; a very neat white cook, a Chinaman, a trigger minstrel, and a Spanish matador, but their light was quite put into the shade by the brilliant Hussar with clanking spurs and gold-laced jacket, who came down the hotel stairs last, but not least; in fact, as he descended they gave him "a hand," as they say in theatres, and quite a vigorous clapping was the welcome accorded him as he stood among them.

An omnibus conveyed the whole party from the Hall to the masked ball, and very lively they were; they sang and laughed, and talked and smoked, and chaffed each other, all but the Austrian Hussar, who sat in a far-off corner, his forage cap drawn over his eyes, his arms folded. Evidently he was not in a merry mood; he was lost in his own thoughts, and debating in his mind what he would say to Rosamond when he met her.

They were rather late arrivals when they drove up to the brightly-lit Hall. Carriage wheels were flashing away from the door, the band was playing, and a high buzz of voices and a most motley air pervaded every hole and corner. All the party masked and entered. They, like everybody else, seemed looking round stealthily and warily, and ever on their guard for fear they should be found out; but after a while they, like the rest of the world, became emboldened, and plunged among the other guests, all glaring at each other with reckless audacity.

The white Hussar did not follow his companions; he stood, with his arms folded, in a distant doorway, alone, his eyes roving rapidly and eagerly round the room. He saw no less than four editions of Mary Queen of Scots, three Follies, half-a-dozen Swiss peasants, half-a-dozen fairies, hospital nurses, vivandieres, summers, winters—but yes, there was one white domino—with three men in attendance, and the other one was dancing. Gradually, carefully, he approached, by wary steering among the waltzers, and found himself close beside her.

She was talking French, with much gesticulation, and with the most perfect ease. How different to her acquaintance with the tongue when they were in Paris years ago! A tall, stout man, Henry the Eighth, probably the 70,000-pounder, said Allan to himself, was standing by. With the air of a proprietor

and with a certain conscious pride in the fluent French of the fascinating Chinoise, Allan advanced now with a deep bow, and in the same language craved the honour of a dance.

The lady looked at him searchingly, and, after some remark, accorded him a waltz rather early on her programme.

"I wonder who you are?" she said, as she scribbled down the word *Hussar* opposite No. 10, with a laugh, "or if you have the faintest idea of who I am. It's more than probable, my good sir, that you mistake me for somebody else; and, remember, if you are not a good dancer, I shall throw you over, for I'm very particular!" she remarked, with all the license of a mask.

"I know you perfectly," said the mask, still in French. "I know your name, who you are, where you come from, and all your history since you were a little girl; and as to dancing," looking round the room superciliously, "if I could not dance better than some of the people here I should go out and put an end to myself."

"The foreigner crows bravely," said a deep voice, and Allan beheld Grabbie Campbell in his jester's dress, his tongue in his cheek, his hands in his pockets, standing among the circle, who, catching his eyes, bestowed upon him one rapid-telling wink.

"The foreigner crows loudly enough, at any rate!" said Rosamond. There was no doubt that it was Rosamond. He recognized her hands—her pretty, little, slender hands. "But give me deeds, not words. I will prove him," looking round. "You say, my good sir, that you know my history, that you can tell all my life since I was quite a little girl. Pray answer me one question. Where did I spend most of my time after I left school? What was the name of the place?"

"Dryad!" to her amazement dropped in one laconic syllable from beneath the stranger's black moustache.

"Yes, yes; I see you are a magician! I shall be quite afraid to dance with you."

It was someone, she told herself, that knew her and her mother. It was no secret that she had passed a good many years in that village among the Marshes, and her attention being taken off for an instant by another would-be suitor, when she turned head again the Hussar was gone.

"Never mind," she said to herself, "I shall see him again at No. 10, and I shall cross-examine him well."

She had almost forgotten all about him when No. 10 came round, and advancing with a profound bow from some remote doorway the mysterious white Hussar claimed this, the Marlowe waits; and encircling her waist with a firm arm, they were soon swept away into the gay, eddying vortex.

The Chinoise (who had discarded her long white cloak) danced well, the Hussar still better. He had not boasted overmuch; he was her best partner of the evening, as he steered skilfully in and out, never losing step, never getting out of time, holding her just steadily and firmly. She cast her mind at once among all her acquaintances, to see who this excellent dancer might be. Nothing in his step, or in anything about him, reminded her of anyone she knew. He was tall, and had dark hair and eyes; it was not Lord Kingsford; he never danced. It was someone who knew her.

"Who are you?" she said, with a laugh, showing all her pearl teeth beneath the face of her mask, as, after a long spin, they passed for a few moments under the orchestra, but to this question the mask only replied by shaking his head in a very decided manner. "But you know you will have to declare yourself after supper, so you may just as well declare yourself now."

"Come along," he said, in English this time; "don't let us lose any more of this delicious waltz," and thus adjured, she equally ready, once more floated off, and this time they kept it up to the very last bar.

"You must have some refreshment," said

the mask, leading her rather imperiously towards a distant refreshment-room.

"No, no—thanks; I had an ice just now; but probably it's one for me and two for yourself," smiling.

"No! Then let us come and sit in the winter garden and get cool."

To this proposition she made no demur, and, arm-in-arm, they went down a long corridor, into an enormous dimly-lit but still sufficiently light conservatory, which was already pretty full.

The mask evidently knew his way about, and conducted her to a retired bench, half-bidden, and yet not quite concealed, by a big Australian tree fern, and on which an adjacent coloured lantern threw sufficiency of light, whilst the music of a fountain close at hand lent its pleasant, drowsy, dreamy, trickling noise to the whole scene, and a statue of the god Cupid, blindfold, but with one eye peeping under the handkerchief, superintended, as it were, personally this charming little corner, where any moderately clever couple could see and hear everybody, and remain unperceived themselves.

"You can remove your mask if you are hot," said the Hussar, coolly, as he took a seat beside her. "No one can see you here."

"Except you," with a laugh, fanning herself rapidly.

"It does not matter about me in the least. Let me look at your hand, and I'll tell you who you are."

"You make me quite afraid of you," holding out her right hand as she spoke; "but you are not as wise as you think."

He turned it over quite gravely, but with an air of deep respect, and said,—

"You are Miss Dane—Miss Rosamond Dane."

"I wonder how you found that out! Supposing I say I am not?"

"You would be quite right—you are not, in reality."

"And, pray, who else do you take me for? You may have two guesses," playfully.

"I don't want to guess; I know."

"You are very wise," ironically.

"I am," expressively, "wiser than most. You pass as unmarried to the world at large, but, in reality, you have been married for years. You are Mrs. Allan Gordon."

At this announcement—made to her by the Hussar in a low voice, leaning confidentially towards her—she uttered a little smothered exclamation, and dropped her fan at his feet. He picked it up very carefully, and, handing it back to her, said,—

"Am I right or not?"

"You are in one sense, and not in another; but how did you find out my secret? There is only one person in the world who knows it besides myself and two women. He has told you!" she exclaimed, removing her mask with hurried fingers, and revealing great startled eyes, flaming with indignation, and a face as white as her gown.

"No one has told me your secret. I knew it always," mysteriously. "I can tell you your whole life, if you wish."

"What—what do you know, you dreadful Hussar?" she asked, in a faint voice.

"I know of your school-days, of your grandmother, of your lonely life at Dryad, till a stranger came—a stranger who rescued you from a tramp one summer's evening—now nearly six years ago."

"Yes, yes," she said, breathlessly.

"I know of your grandmother's death, your marriage, your trip to Paris."

"Yes," now trembling all over, "it is all true; but, oh, clever, clever mask, since you know so much, can you tell me what became of him—of Allan Gordon?"

"Perhaps I could," said the mask, significantly; "but I should have to ask you one or two questions first, Mrs. Gordon."

"Tell me," she gasped, with one hand to her throat, "is—he is dead?"

"Would you be glad if I said 'yes?'" maliciously.

"Don't torment me nor play with my feelings, you hateful, wicked mask, but tell me what you know."

"Perhaps I may," he rejoined, "if you tell me one or two things first. Tell me," lowering his voice to a whisper, "tell me, Miss Dane, are you going to be married to this rich man with whom your name is so freely coupled—Mr. Somers?"

"What is that to you?" she demanded, defiantly.

"Something; at any rate, I wish to know."

"Then your wish is not destined to be gratified."

"Be it so. You will hear no more of Allan Gordon."

This was a terrible alternative. The mask had a slow and impressive way of speaking (probably assumed) but that carried conviction with it to the ears of the pale and trembling Chinoise.

This hateful mask, with his cool manners, folded arms, Hessian spurred boots, and admirably shaped feet, with the ideal instep, was not, as she had at first thought, a confidant of Lord Kingsford's, for he knew nothing of Dryad, nor her first meeting with Allan. He was either a friend of Allan's or the devil!

"Am I to make any reply?" he asked, presently.

"Yes," she assented, feebly; "the gentleman you mention has asked me to marry him, but I have not given him an answer yet. I am to have a week to consider it."

"And what is your answer to be?" continued the mask, rather sharply.

"I think you are presuming too far. You are overstepping every boundary; even the license of a mask has limits," she said, with uncontrollable indignation.

"And I do not—there is the difference," decidedly. "Are you going to give me an answer, Mrs. Gordon? Are you going to marry this man or not?" he demanded, with a ring of repressed emotion—it might be passion—in his voice.

"I am! since you will know," she replied, turning on him, and confronting him defiantly.

"You are!" seizing her roughly by the arm, "and why?"

"Pray, strike me!" she exclaimed, with withering sarcasm. "I know you would like to do it, white Hussar! You have no scruples of any kind, and it is not a bit more cowardly than forcing yourself into the confidence of a miserable woman, who is completely in your power."

The mask dropped her wrist with an air of compunction; and she proceeded, in a low, quiet tone,—

"What is it you want from me? Is it money?"

"No, no!" with energy; "don't think that of me," anxiously. "I am a rich man; but tell me why you are going to marry for money? What is money to you?" he asked, in an eager, almost tremulous whisper.

"You, who already know so much, must know that I have nothing in my own home to compensate me for my unhappy past—nothing!" wringing her hands. "My mother and I have always been strangers. We never met till I was eighteen, and since then circumstances have estranged us. We have nothing in common. I am tired of this hollow, gay life; it means nothing to me; I want a peaceful home of my own, where I can do some good."

"Meaning when you will have a weak-minded man to deal with, and the spending of a thousand pounds a week," said the Hussar, bitterly.

"You are wrong! I shall have enormous possibilities of doing good. I shall only look upon myself as a steward for that money. I shall build schools, almshouses, tenements, an orphanage. I shall build and endow churches."

"Stop, stop! Spare me the edifying recital!" putting up his hand; "and this rich

old man, you love him, of course—for his money," with a sneer.

"I do not love him. You may spare your sneers. I don't profess to love him, and he is content."

"He thinks, poor old fool, that it will come in time."

"He does not, you wicked, hateful mask! He knows that I respect and like him, and that is enough for him."

"It would not be enough for me, then," calmly refolding his arms.

"You—and who cares for you? No one, I'm sure!" mockingly.

"Very likely not," quite placidly; "but some day or other you may see and like a younger and handsomer man. Goodness knows you might easily do that," contemptuously; "and you may even run away with him. I wonder if it will be 'enough for him' under these circumstances."

"I see you brought me here only to insult me!" said Rosamond, rising with much dignity. "You need not come with me; I prefer finding my own way back alone."

"Stay!" rising and rudely interposing himself between her and her only mode of exit. "Do not leave me in anger. You have told me that you are going to marry again, and this time for money; that you may do good works, and thus, I suppose, to your own conscience expiate some deed that wears and frets it day by day—if conscience you have. And talking of evil deeds, conscience, and such matters brings me to my third, and last, question. Tell me," he said, leaning over her, and taking each of her hands in his. "Tell me, Rosamond Gordon, on your honour and word," and looking her full in the face, "what have you done with your child?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"And is even this not to be spared me?" she cried, staggering slightly, with ashen lips and wild, agonised eyes; then sinking once more down on the seat from which she had just risen she buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

The masked Hussar, standing by immovable, and as unmoved as fate, observed her shaking shoulders, observed the tears one by one stealing through her fingers and falling on her lap without a quiver of pity.

Fortunately for them the winter garden was empty—the weird strains of one of Strauss's valses had called all dancers back to the ball-room. How strange it sounded, this dance music and this accompaniment of a woman's sobs; but these sobs had no effect upon Allan.

"It is remorse," he said to himself, emphatically. "She is sorry now, and well she may be! Well, I am waiting," he said, when the first passionate outburst had subsided and her sobs had died away into long-drawn, gasping sighs.

Her next movement took him completely off his guard.

"How dare you!" she cried, vehemently, "you bad man! who for your own ends wish to get me into your power, and to crush me to the earth!" pausing, and struggling for composure, as she gazed at him with wet, defiant eyes, as of some poor deer driven to bay. "How dare you so much as name my poor little baby to me! Did you think, did you hope, that I murdered it?" she asked, with renewed passion; "you, who, I suppose, are some messenger of the child's father, who deserted me—"

"I know that. Whatever he did or did not do you deserted your unfortunate child, Mrs. Gordon."

"I? I. Why not say I murdered it at once! Don't scruple to think it, if you please. It does me no harm, nor it, poor little angel."

"But you did desert it," he continued, persistently. "You gave it to Mother Nan to nurse; you paid her for its keep—seven shillings a week—and then you forgot it!"

"How plainly it is seen that it is a man let it speak!" she exclaimed, mockingly.

"No woman would talk so foolishly. A woman would know that no other woman would abandon her helpless little infant! Do you place me, oh, clever, far-seeing, fortune-telling mask, below the very animals!" with biting irony. "Why, even a cat would not desert a kitten, a hen her chickens! Pray, how much lower in the social scale than them do you consider me?"

"You would make an admirable actress, Mrs. Gordon, but still you have not answered my question. You had a baby, I believe. What did you do with it? Where is it?"

"Oh, why should I have to tell you?" fiercely. "What is it to you to know where it is? Is it that he may know? or—is he dead?"

"Never mind him. Tell me—tell me where you left it."

"In Drydd churchyard," she gasped. "In Drydd churchyard. Now are you satisfied? Under a little green mound near the Lynch gate. You can see it if you choose, with a cross at the head, with no name. Poor little darling, it had none! You who seem to hate me, to know the worst of me, to revel in all my most agonising griefs must be quite happy now to know that I had never even the consolation of holding my baby in my arms, of even seeing its face, like other more fortunate mothers. If—half-talking to herself—" oh! if I had only seen its dear little face once, to have the memory of it to think of, to live upon, if I had even held its dead body in my arms it would have been something, but oh!"—with tears raining down her face—"to think that I never saw it at all! If ever I got to Heaven to think that I shall not know my own child! Oh! if it had only lived I would have not minded the other loss so much!"

"But I always understood that it had lived," said the mask, in a hoarse and rather shaken voice. "How was it you never saw it?"

"I was ill, dying. They all thought the one grave would hold us both. How I wish it had! And for days I knew nothing. I was as if I was dead, and when I came back to consciousness and looked for it, for all I had, for what was to be everything to me, the cradle was empty, the little clothes I had toiled over late and early were folded away. It was dead and buried."

There was no mistaking the agony of the mother's heart, her firm belief in the death of the infant, her grief after five years still fresh, and keen, and pitiful, her quivering lips, her tearful eyes.

Allan could not trust himself to speak. He turned away, and looked intently into the conservatory in silence.

Poor Rosamond, to be some day—soon, oh! very soon—happy Rosamond, although Tommy had never worn the dress nor lain in the cradle. He felt that he would like to go down upon his knees and kiss the hem of her dress, and humbly beg her pardon for having so long wronged her in thought. It was, then, Mrs. Brand who had made away with her baby. No wonder there was a yawning gulf between her and her daughter.

"I hope you are satisfied now, and will permit me to return to the ball room," said that young lady, at last. "If having torn and lacerated every feeling that is left in my heart to their utmost extent, if having caused me the most poignant anguish I have known for a long time, if having opened old wounds afresh pleases you, you have every right to be a happy man. You have succeeded in your endeavours in a manner worthy of a better cause. And now, sir—" as a sudden lull came in the band, a loud sound of laughing, and a buzz of talk—"Harken, the clock strikes two. Time is up. You will have the goodness to unmask."

Seeing his evident reluctance, his desire to escape, she sprang between him and the passage, and said,—

"Know who you are I will. Oh! mine enemy," with a strange unpleasant laugh,

"it is my turn now. You shall not escape. Wherever you go I will follow you, so unmask! unmask!"

But still he did not move, but stood irresolute.

"If you will not, it shall be done for you. I will call one of the stewards. I will proclaim you to everyone. I will say that presuming on this covering over your false face you have persecuted me most cruelly all the evening, and now are afraid to take the consequences. You coward!"

This was a taunt there was no withstanding. So the white Hussar said,—

"Patience, patience, and you shall see who I am," as with slow and lingering fingers he untied the mask, removed it from his face with still slower movement, and disclosed to Rosamond's petrified, horrified gaze the familiar features of Lord Kingsford.

"You never suspected that it was me," he said, in a rather hesitating manner, as he glanced at her appealingly.

"I never did. I never thought so badly of you. Oh! I would not have believed it," gazing into his face as if he were some new and horrible species of the human race—as if she could not believe her eyes. "What object had you in raking up my past, in talking to me"—with trembling lips—"of my poor little dead baby. There are other ways of giving pain than striking or stabbing people, just as cruel, as cowardly, and as unmanly. I never, never thought," with a sob in her voice, "that Tommy's father could have—could have,"—and here she found further speech impossible.

"Rosamond, my darling Rosamond! Listen to me, I implore you," he urged, taking her by the hand in a distracted manner.

"Rosamond, your darling!" she cried, turning once more towards him with a face of flame. "That is enough. You forget that you are a married man, my lord, and you forget that you are a gentleman, as you have forgotten all the evening that I am nothing but a defenceless woman, who a you have amused yourself with cross-questioning, torturing, and finally insulting, and now"—sweeping her satin train aside and confronting him with growing angry eyes—"as long as you and I live, Lord Kingsford, never presume to speak to me again," and holding her head very high, with the gait of an offended princess, Rosamond walked down the conservatory—was beset by a crowd of eager would-be or defrauded partners the instant she appeared in the door, and was at once lost to sight, whilst Lord Kingsford remained standing exactly where she had left him, looking like one who has received some violent and stunning and unexpected blow, and with feelings that may be better imagined than described.

The Chanoinesse—women are better at keeping up a part than men—danced with her usual *dan* and spirit for the remainder of the night, and had to submit to a little mild censure her very, very, long and marked absence in the conservatory with the white Hussar. People said she was quite the beauty of the evening, but that was nothing new. Strangers were, as usual, enthusiastic, but her own friends thought her not looking her best. She was very pale; her gaiety seemed not very spontaneous; and one or two of her dearest lady friends whispered behind their fans that she "looked as if she had been crying." She had evidently had a scene with that mysterious white Hussar. Who could he have been! Probably some old lover. Ah, these old lovers! How tiresome they are, and why will they turn up? especially when they are not wanted. As for the white Hussar, he never appeared again in the ball-room. He made his way home alone, and was very reticent to all questions as to how he had enjoyed himself, when his merry companions, looking very fagged indeed, and as if they had been up all night—which, by the way, they had—met at breakfast next morning.

"You had no end of a case on with the

pretty Chanoinesse," said one, facetiously. "Don't let old Somers catch you at it; and you seemed to be having it pretty well all your own way, too." Query? Had he.

(To be continued.)

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT first visit of Beatrice Stuart to the bijou villa was followed by many others. The wealthy bride and the beautiful, lovely singer became fast friends.

Isabel never clung to Bee as she had clung to her sister, but she was very fond of the girl whose life seemed so different to her own.

Beatrice's services were not required constantly at the concerts, and it grew into quite a custom for her to spend her leisure evenings at Mrs. Yorke's. Harold looked on well pleased at the intimacy; as an artist he admired Bee's beauty, and she was so true and innocent, so simple and childlike, in spite of her strange position, that he desired no better companion for his wife.

"I should like to find someone very nice whom Beatrice could marry," the bride confided to her husband, when July was some days old, and the London season was waning.

"I don't think you would have much difficulty," returned the artist; "she is so pretty, any man would like her for the ornament of his house."

Belle pouted.

"But she wouldn't like any man, Harold; it must be someone very nice and uncommon," Mr. Yorke laughed.

"I think you are more difficult to please than Miss Stuart would be herself."

"You don't mean Bee would accept the first man who proposed to her?"

"Don't snap my head off, Belle. I mean that if a man of good character and pleasing manner offered Beatrice Stuart his love I don't think she would refuse it."

"But—"

"She is not like her sister. The little Miss Stuart we knew at Alandyke would have scorned any man unless she loved him; her sister is of a different type. Unless I am mistaken Beatrice is formed to be loved, not to love."

"I don't see the difference."

"There is one, Belle. I can't explain it to you. If you were an artist, perhaps, you would have noticed it; some women feel love a necessity, the others only require to be loved."

"And which am I?" just a little crossly.

"A very charming combination of both."

The conversation broke off then, for the door opened to admit the girl who was its subject. Two months of London life had given Bee a pretty air of self-possession, a nameless composure which had been quite wanting in the little music mistress. She wore a soft black dress (she affected black, perhaps she knew how well it contrasted with her fair skin, and bright golden hair), trimmed with lace, a knot of rose-coloured ribbon at her throat, no other ornaments. Belle, who was resplendent in silk and jewels, gave a little sigh.

"You always look nice in anything. Now if I wore that dress I should be a fright."

"You couldn't," whispered Bee. "And so this is really my last evening with you. I can't believe it?"

"Yes, we leave London to-morrow."

"Shall you go to Alandyke?" and her tone was very wistful.

"No, Uncle Jocelyn is still abroad. Don't look so disappointed, child; you would hear nothing at Alandyke. Lord Carruthers told me he saw the woman who was the last person to speak to your sister, and she asserts positively Nell took the road to Wharton."

"By-the-way, Belle," put in her husband, perhaps to change the subject, "Lord Carruthers is coming to dinner. I met him this morning, and he invited himself."

"He was here on Tuesday, and again last week. Beatrice, he always comes when you are here."

"Does he?"

"Yes, invariably. If you don't take care I shall be jealous. Lord Carruthers is a special favourite of mine."

"I don't wonder," said Bee, gently; "he seems so good and kind, I think anyone he cared for would be safe from every trouble."

"He's a dear old man."

Bee looked surprised.

"You don't call him old, surely?"

"Nearly sixty," put in Mr. Yorke, gently, "according to the Peerage. What age did you guess him, Miss Stuart?"

"I! Oh! I never thought about his age; he seemed to me like one of the knights in the old romances."

"Your knight is coming," said Mr. Yorke, archly; and then the door opened to admit the brave old soldier, who had once laid heart and fortune at Nell Stuart's feet.

He had been fond of Nell; he had pitied her so intensely, but he already loved Beatrice better far. He was nearly sixty, and Bee was seventeen, but, incredible as it seems, the bluff old soldier was completely captive to the girl's sweet face. There was nothing rash or infatuated in his attachment; he had no intention of making the rest of his life miserable if he could not get Bee to pass it with him, only he wanted her, and he meant to ask her.

It was a very pleasant little party. The young host and hostess understood the art of entertaining thoroughly, and Bee and the Earl were not critical guests. When they went back to the drawing-room Miss Stuart sang two or three simple ballads.

"Don't," said Belle, as she began "In the gloaming." "That is such a sad song. I would rather have something cheerful. Remember this is our last evening."

The Earl looked disappointed.

"And you really go to-morrow?" he asked Belle.

"Really. I tell Miss Stuart she must make haste and leave London too, now all our pleasant little meetings are broken up."

"I can't," said Bee, simply. "I must sing for Mr. Ainslie three weeks longer, and then I expect I shall go in the provinces."

Mr. Yorke had lingered in the drawing-room to smoke a choice cigar. It suddenly occurred to the wife of his bosom he was a long time about it, and with a word of apology to the Earl she went in search of him. Bee sat still on her music-stool with a strange wonder whether she should ever sit in that pleasant lamp-lit drawing-room again.

"Miss Stuart—Beatrice!"

She turned. The General had left his chair and stood bending over her.

"I want to ask you a question," he said, simply; "but you must answer me just as you please. Don't let any thought of my pain influence you. Bee, do you think it is possible for a girl to be happy with a husband old enough to be her father?"

It was a very different manner from that in which he had proposed to Nell; but then he really loved Bee, whereas in his former wooing pity alone influenced him.

Beatrice Stuart looked intently on the ground, as though the pattern of the carpet interested her.

"I suppose so," she said, slowly, "if he loved her."

"Ah, but if she did not love him?"

Bee's blue eyes still regarded the ground.

"I think if a girl felt very sure she was dearly loved, if she admired and revered her husband, the years between them wouldn't matter. People would say nasty things, but—she would get older every day."

"I don't care what people say," said the old soldier, quickly. "Bee, is it cruel to ask you to link your bright youth with my grey hairs? Child, if you would come to me, no bride should ever be more tenderly idolized than my sweet girl wife."

Bee raised her blue eyes half wistfully.

"It would make me very happy," she said, gently. "Only—"

"Only what?"

"I am so young. You might get tired of me."

"I'm not afraid of that; only, child, think of the long years between us."

"I hate young men. I always did, and"—with a little sigh—"it must be so nice to be loved. Lord Carruthers, I have longed for love so much since I lost Nell."

"Nell would be glad to think her little sister was safe with me. Ah, Bee, it is only four months since I returned to England. I remember Jocelyn Leigh staring when I told him if I could find a wife I should be married, in spite of my years and grey hairs."

"I don't think I should like Sir Jocelyn."

"He behaved cruelly to your sister. It was a shock to me to find him master of Alandyke. I had expected to see my old friend's grandchild reigning there. I had brought pearls and silks and rare lace for her from the East. Well, I can present them now to Lady Carruthers."

Bee looked so amazed that the General explained.

"She doesn't exist yet, but she will soon. We will have a short engagement, Bee. You must be Countess of Carruthers in a month."

Bee gasped, then her face grew pale.

"What's the matter, dear?"

"I forgot. I mustn't marry you. There is mamma. She and Mr. d'Arcy are worry enough to me. What would they be to you?"

"I can stand it," returned the General, quietly; "so that they leave you in peace. Your poor mother has made a sad mistake, I expect."

"Yes."

"And you don't remember your own father?"

"He was very different. Nell used to say he was all that was good and noble. She told me once he was forsaken by all his own relations because he married my mother. He came from Yorkshire. Nell was so pleased to go to Alandyke, because it was her father's country."

A strange suspicion came to Lord Carruthers. He remembered how Nell had told him her father's motto; he remembered the last conversation he ever had with Sir Kenneth Leigh, and he felt pretty certain that Bee was the child of his favourite Harold.

But he said nothing. If it was so, if, as he firmly believed, Beatrice and her sister had a right to the name of Leigh, then he was convinced they had also a right to Alandyke, but while all was mere conjecture he would keep his suspicions from Sir Jocelyn. After all, the baronet might as well enjoy his possessions. As Countess Carruthers little Bee would need nothing at his hands, and Nell—well, it seemed too probable that Nell had gone to the silent land where wealth and rank could not follow her.

Pretty Mrs. Yorke found her husband standing by the open window.

"What a time you've been, Belle."

"I!" said Mrs. Belle, indignantly, "why, it's you who've been long; it's a whole hour since we came in from dinner."

"And you never felt anxious about me before. Lord Carruthers had a better opinion of your wifely affection."

"Harold, what do you mean?"

He put his arm round her fondly, as though he meant the caress to atone for the teasing.

"The General's a deep plotter, Belle; he wanted to have a little talk with Miss Stuart, and he implored me to stay here because he thought your anxiety would certainly bring you to inquire about my welfare, and he would then have his desired opportunity."

"But what does he want?"

"I believe he wishes to ask her a question!" Belle never guessed what sort of question. She stood there leaning on her husband's arm, and the minutes crept on until the clock chimed ten, then she started as from a dream. "Oh! Harold, I've been here nearly an hour,

What will Beatrice think, our last evening and all too?"

"I think she will forgive you," returned Harold, quietly; "you'd better go and ask her. I should say the General's *le-dieu* was over by this time."

Isabel took his advice; she found Bee on the music stool just as she had left her. Lord Carruthers had his pocket-book in his hand; he was taking down the exact address of her mother and Mr. D'Arcy.

"I'm sorry I've been so long," said Mrs. Yorke, sweetly. "Bee, what are you doing? Have you been giving the Earl valuable information that he's taking it down so carefully?"

"She has given me something better than information," said Lord Carruthers, with his courtly grace. "She has promised in a few weeks' time she will give me herself."

Belle started.

"Herself?"

"Aye!" seeing her mystification, and rather enjoying it. "When you come back to town I shall have to introduce her to you under a new name. Beatrice Stuart will have passed away to make room for the Countess Carruthers."

(Continued on page 141.)

EARLY IMPRESSIONS.—Most people are set in their first opinions. Our early impressions would prevail with us through life if our opinions could not be altered. But the mind can be affected and the understanding influenced; therefore our first opinion of things can be changed and eradicated. The most powerful way perhaps to effect a change is by the influence of example. The schoolboy that is fond of mischief while at school generally commits more or less crime during his lifetime, unless induced by good examples to mend his ways. Thus we see the great importance of forming such habits only as will render us happy in life, and guide us smoothly through that short space of time which is allotted to man.

REMARKABLE INCIDENTS.

LORD ELMON says, in one case, in which he was counsel, for a long time the evidence did not appear to touch the prisoner at all; and he looked about him with entire unconcern, seeming to think himself quite safe. At last the surgeon was called, who stated that deceased had been killed by a gunshot in the head; and he produced the matted hair, and other stuff, taken from the wound. It was all hardened with dried blood. A basin of warm water was brought into court, and as the mass was gradually softened a piece of printed paper appeared, the wadding of the gun, which proved to be half of a ballad. The other half had been found in the pocket of the prisoner when he was taken. He was convicted and hanged.

He cites another case of a man who was apprehended twelve years after the commission of the deed. He had made his escape, and though every possible search was made he could not be found. Twelve years afterwards a brother of the murdered man was at Liverpool in a public-house. He fell asleep while sitting in his chair and was awakened by some one picking his pocket. He started, opened his eyes, and instantly exclaimed:

"Merciful heavens! the man that killed my brother twelve years ago."

Ambulance quickly came, the man was secured, tried and "condemned." He had enlisted as a soldier and gone to India immediately after the deed was committed, and he had just landed at Liverpool on his return when his first act was to pick the pocket of the brother of the man he had murdered twelve years before.

"I was very extraordinary," says his lordship, "that the man, waking out of his sleep, should so instantly know him."

NOVELLETTE.

MY ARTIST LOVER.

CHAPTER I.

My earliest recollections, the joys and sorrows of my childhood, and of the first nineteen years of my life, were intimately connected with the grey old garden and ruined house—all that the ravages of time and the decay of wealth had left to tell of the departed glories of Vernon Towers and the pride of an ancient name; while I, Gladys Vernon, in my own small person, was the last lineal representative (and a very unworthy one the pater used to tell me) of the Vernons of that ilk.

Our old gardener, Tim Lingen, had never, in all probability, heard of "culture" save in connection with plants; and the fact that the lily and sunflower was the badge of the æsthetic was quite unknown to his simple soul. Nevertheless, that dear, ancient, rustic retainer had filled such borders as he pleased to redeem from the surrounding wilderness for my special benefit with those same flowers. And I loved to walk between the regal lines of pure white lilies and deep-toned flaunting sunflowers—crowned like these with a golden aureole of ruddy locks—while like them I toiled not, neither did I spin. Here, however, the simile was abandoned, for I imagined myself to be neither useful nor ornamental. At that early period I had the blissful ignorance of a savage with regard to my personal and mental qualifications.

The pater said I was incorrigibly lazy, and my mind, according to his views, was a hopelessly vacant one. Did it ever occur to him that I led a strangely, unnatural, isolated life for a girl, and that I literally had nothing to do save dream and read, or play with my dear old mastiff, Brian, and scamper round the park on my pony?

The outside world was still a *terra incognita* to me; such glimpses, moreover, as I got beyond the grey walls of my garden and the pallings of the park, did not present me with visions of entrancing interest.

Our village church, to which I and the pater used to walk on Sundays in solemn procession, greeted by the way with bobs and grins, and curtsies from the rural population of our agricultural parish, afforded an edifying change doubtless, and all the spiritual pabulum necessary for my youthful soul; but it could scarcely be looked upon as a source of gaiety or of desperate dissipation; nevertheless, this was all the variety that entered into my girlish life.

The housekeeper, Margaret Davis, who was successively my mother's maid and my own nurse, held the reins of government with a firm and judicious hand, which needed neither interference or assistance from me, and I was as profoundly ignorant of housekeeping as I imagine I was of the other arts and inventions of civilized existence.

"Ignorant, brainless, and a girl!" was the pater's brief comment on me; and having thus succinctly described and catalogued me he dismissed me without another thought to the limbo of useless inventions, and to the captivating society of Miss Bayly, my antiquated governess companion, going blandly on in his own small scientific way—filling up the measure of his days in elaborating a monograph on spiders, and in corresponding with the various learned societies of which he was a member.

I have vaguely tried to imagine, now and again, what Sir John Vernon would have done with me if I had been a boy, and what my training would have been; or whether I should be left to run wild at my own sweet will, even as Gladys Vernon was.

Thus I had grown to have but a shabby opinion of myself, and to feel that somehow I had been wronged in being introduced into the world at all.

"Now I should extremely like to know what

is to become of me, and why in the name of common sense anybody ever took the trouble to bring me into existence, when I wasn't wanted in the least." I reflected disconsolately one hot, breathless afternoon in June, when I had climbed to my favourite perch on the mossy crumbling wall, overlooking a lonely lane—lonely, but still a connecting link with the outer world. It was a somewhat elevated position, but one in which I was completely screened from the observations of chance passers-by by the lovely branches and clustering foliage of a spanish chestnut that grew just within the wall, and flung its fantastic garbled arms far and wide.

This nook was my haven of refuge. Here I could dream and build my castles in Spain in peace. Here I brought the few novels I had contrived to dislodge, thick with the dust of generations, from behind ponderous tomes of the driest "ologies" that ever adorned the walls of a library.

On this special June day I was snugly ensconced in my favorite seat, while a quaint old copy of the "Arabian Nights" lay open on my knee. But I was not reading, only musing half-aloud after my solitary wont.

"If I could only have been as beautiful as mamma was, for instance, or if I'd ever had a brother to care for me a little, and talk to me sometimes, life would perhaps have been worth living; but as it is—who ever heard of a girl in a book, as stupid and lonely as I am, or with hair and eyes like mine?" I soliloquised in a low tone of discontent.

A quiet, half-smothered laugh broke in upon my musings at this juncture—a laugh that came from the lane; and a voice (if voices can be called delicious) that surely was the most delicious, most musical I had ever heard, sounded below me, saying,—

"Well—not very often, perhaps, but then their rarity constitutes one of their greatest charms."

I startled as if I had been shot, and felt myself blushing fiercely. I was furious with myself too, for being caught in this way, also for feeling discomposed. No girl in a novel ever conducted herself like that! But at least I was a Vernon, I assured myself, and death would be preferable to running away. So I peeped down cautiously, and behold—*a man*.

I suppose I had expected to see a man, yet I was blushing more hotly than ever, and feeling more and more uncomfortable, just as if I had expected to see a cow suddenly endowed with speech, and responding to my complaint, instead of a reasonable human being.

He, the man, evidently didn't share my stupid confusion and discomfort.

No, the wretch! He was looking up at me quite steadily—with the most audacious eyes, and a cool amused air, which piqued me instantly.

"Did you speak to me?" I inquired stiffly, with a laudable assumption of extreme haughtiness.

"Seeing you were not waxwork, I thought I ought to speak," he rejoined.

I didn't understand the allusion, and replied with growing ire,—

"I think you are very rude."

"I beg pardon earnestly," said he, dropping at once the careless, bantering tone, and removing his hat, exhibited the crown of a shapely head, covered with wavy brown curls. "Pray believe I had no intention of being rude. The merest chance, the silence and stillness of this lane, waited your complaint my way;" he smiled provokingly again. "And I replied jestingly without a thought I was about," he added gravely; "to take advantage of the fact, that I at last he held a fellow-creature, after miles of unbroken solitude, to ask a question. But I may not dare to do so now."

I glanced down from my throne. The suppliant had not turned away, as he uttered the despairing words in a tone of mock pain. No, the frank, fearless eyes were looking into mine, and the beautiful mouth wore a smile of entreaty for pardon.

My experience of men was small; beyond my father and the rector I had scarcely spoken with an educated man, but I knew instinctively that this one was a gentleman. Birth and breeding, the ineffable grace of long descent, were in every line of his proud, handsome face.

"You can ask your question, I suppose," I returned, still stiffly.

"It was merely this—am I far from Fordham? and"—referring to a description or address, written in a notebook he took from his pocket—"is Vernon Towers in or near the village?"

"You are now in Fordham parish, and this—this is Vernon Towers," I concluded, lamely.

"This is Vernon Towers!" he echoed, looking at me, and then at the wall, moss-grown and picturesque with ivy, and the dainty ponds of tiny fountains which grew thickly in every cranny and crevice of the decaying stone.

"I mean," I explained, "that this"—indicating with a wave of my hand the prospect to my right, from which he was shut out by the wall on which I sat—"is part of the garden of Vernon Towers. The house, all that's left of it, is further on, nearly half-a-mile. Keep straight along the lane until you come to a stile; then take the turning to the right. It will bring you into the road which runs through the park, and Vernon Towers lies before you."

"A thousand thanks and apologies, Adieu! I have no right, I suppose, to utter the hope that we may meet again in the future?" said he, speaking then, I noticed, with a slight, very slight, foreign accent.

"Why not? I shall hope we may," I began, briskly, and then stopped again, silenced by this new-born shyness.

"It is possible; the world is small indeed." He smiled, and lifting his hat again, with another wistful upward look, turned and went lightly down the lane.

I am fain to confess that I considerably endangered my precious neck by leaning over the wall as far as I dared, to watch his retreating form. The erect, shapely head set so finely on the broad, strong shoulders compelled my admiration; and I caught myself wondering if the pater had ever looked like that when he was young. I laughed gaily at the idea, for though Sir John was stately and handsome enough I had never imagined it possible for anyone to love him. Yet, what somehow suggested the pater to me, I asked myself, as I watched the little young figure till a curve in the lane hid it from my craning neck and straining eyes. The pater, grim and grey, and this Adonis or Bayard! It was absurd, but I had compared the two, merely, I suppose, because I had no other man to contrast or compare the new-comer with.

CHAPTER II.

THAT night at dinner, our tedious, wearisome meal, where I was used to sit, dull and silent under the severe scrutiny of two pairs of elderly eyes, Sir John remarked to Miss Bayly,—

"I have had a visitor to-day, luckily for me, a rare event at Vernon Towers, as such things are a great interruption to regular study."

"Rather unusual for the rector to call twice in a month, I believe, Sir John," hazarded Miss Bayly, in her milk-and-water tone.

"The rector! I spoke of a stranger, madam, a young fellow who came to me with good recommendations from a fellow of the Society, with whom I am on intimate terms. The young man is an artist; it appears, travelling in England for pleasure, and for profit also, probably. Having heard of this house he desired to make some sketches of The Towers and the ruins of the chapel."

"Then you have, I presume, accorded that permission, Sir John?" asked Miss Bayly, settling her mouth into the proper "prunes and prism" form.

"Well, yes; that is to say I have not refused it. The young man is to call again, and as he also has an introduction to the rector I shall hear what Fothergill has to say of him. He appears a gentleman-like young fellow, no turn for science, I am sorry to say; otherwise he might have proved an acquisition."

Might have been! So then, because a man didn't care for spiders he had no further use or interest in the pater's eyes!

He was an artist too, and this was the first time I had ever beheld a real live artist—almost the first time I had conversed with a young man, presumably of my own class.

I was careful not to impart the story of that delightful chance meeting to my lawful guardian; but I inwardly determined to learn more of this interesting unknown, of whose very name I was ignorant as yet, at the earliest opportunity.

As soon as I was released from the penance of the dinner-table, and Miss Bayly had composed herself for her usual nap in the drawing-room, I sought nurse Margaret's sanctum, called by courtesy "the housekeeper's room."

"Margaret," said I, abruptly entering the room, "I have a terrific lot of questions to ask, and I want to know so many things that I scarcely know where to begin."

"Suppose you try a few of them, my dear," said Margaret, looking up from her work with a smile.

My nurse had spent nearly all her life with cultured people, and her manner and appearance were almost those of a lady, far above the generality of her class. To me she had been the only substitute for a mother I had known in my lonely life of nineteen years. It was to Margaret, of all that loveless household, that I turned instinctively for help or comfort in distress, and it was she alone who shared my rare, girlish joys.

"Well, the fact is, nurse, the pater has had a visitor to-day," I began, as I seated myself on a low stool, and laid my flame-coloured locks caressingly on her knee.

"An Italian, I believe, Miss Gladys," "An Italian!" I repeated in amazement. "He speaks English as well as I do."

It was nurse's turn to look surprised now. "Have you seen him, Miss Gladys?" she inquired.

I proceeded to explain as much as I cared to do of the afternoon's interview, and the fact that I had directed him to The Towers.

"Tell me all you can about him, Margaret, and make haste to find out the rest, because you know the advent of a real, live young man is an event of no small magnitude in Fordham," I laughed; "and this one looks as if he had stepped from the pages of a three-volume novel. I only hope his name corresponds with his appearance."

"His name is Adrian Baroni, so I learned from the card he sent in to Sir John. But, Miss Gladys, I don't approve of your speaking of a stranger in the way you do."

"You dear, wise old nurse," I returned, shaking my head at her, "anybody would be interesting in a howling wilderness like Fordham; and when a man is both young and handsome I should be more than mortal girl if I were not wildly curious about him."

Nurse smiled, and said no more, while I mentally determined I would, before I was much older, learn the meaning of his speech about my hair, and the "charm" thereof—that unlucky hair, which seemed to be the source of some dull displeasure to the pater, who on the only occasion I'd heard him mention it observed, coldly, that he had never heard of either Fashaws or Vernons with such hair as mine—a highly objectionable hue, he considered.

I remember quoting the speech to nurse Davis, and her sharp retort, "I'm glad of it!" as she passed her hand lovingly over the obnoxious curls.

"Nurse, am I like mamma?" I exclaimed, suddenly, one day, after regarding myself intently in the long, narrow mirror set between the windows of her room.

"Not particularly, my dear, though your

eyes are much the colour of hers," was the quiet response.

"I'm glad I am like her in something," I answered, impulsively. "It's not nice to feel oneself odd, in a way, as I feel."

"Miss Gladys," said Margaret, gravely, "I wish you would not make yourself peculiar by encouraging such very strange ideas. I have heard that Lady Vernon's mother was a Welsh woman, which quite accounts for the colour of your hair, if Sir John has such an unreasonable dislike to it."

The morning after my interview with Adrian Baroni I awoke from a pleasant jumble of dreams in which the artist was painting my portrait, and at the same time declaring that I bore a striking likeness to Miss Bayly, a statement I received with much internal ire and outward laughter, in which he joined. I was roused from the enjoyment of our combined gaiety by Margaret's kindly voice outside my door, saying,—

"Miss Gladys, my dear, I think you have overslept yourself. Remember, Sir John is particular about your not being late on Sundays."

Sunday! I had forgotten the day entirely. Well, I must do penance after our usual fashion, I acknowledged to myself, ruefully, as I sprang out of bed, and into my morning bath.

"I suppose artists—Italian ones—don't go to church," I meditated during the progress of my toilet; "at any rate, not to ours; he is a Catholic, no doubt."

Notwithstanding this settled conviction I arranged myself with peculiar care.

"Not that it matters the least bit," I assured myself, gravely; "but one wouldn't wish to appear an absolute fright in the eyes of a stranger."

In my anxiety to avoid the possibility of this calamity I inspected my scanty wardrobe doubtfully, deciding at last in favour of a soft India silk, relieved by suggestions of dull gold.

I bound up the coils of my fiery tresses in a compact knot behind, while in front it fell naturally into endless little curves and curls over a low, broad forehead.

My toilet was completed to my entire satisfaction, and I ran gaily down the broad, old staircase, arriving in the hall by making a flying leap of the last four steps, which pleasing feat I performed, unaware that Sir John Vernon's cold, grey eyes were observing me the while from the half-open door of the breakfast room.

"Gladys, if you could possibly persuade yourself that you are no longer a child I should feel infinitely obliged to you. At—at—your age," said the Pater, stumbling a little as he endeavoured to recollect what my age was; failing entirely he recovered himself in a hurry, and went on with his usual staidness, "You should endeavour to avoid that indecent haste and boisterous manner which too often characterises your demeanour. You are late for breakfast again. Do not attempt to deny it," he added, as I looked up, half tempted to reply; but I smothered the inclination, and took my seat beside Miss Bayly—all my innocent gaiety effectually nipped in the bud—and accepted the cup of lukewarm tea that lady offered me, with a contrite if not a thankful heart. Lukewarm tea and cool eggs do not, according to my experience, conduce to one's comfort and appetite, especially when the repast is accompanied with a running fire of small criticisms on impropriety, unladylike conduct, and so forth.

I was heartily glad to escape from my pretext of a breakfast, carrying with me some fragments of buttered toast which I had surreptitiously concealed in my handkerchief, much to the detriment of that article of attire, for the especial benefit of my raven, who had been presented to me by Tim Lirgen when I was so small as to regard the gift as a kind of white elephant, to be propitiated in dread and trembling; but as I grew older I gradually came to look upon him with an affection out of

all proportion with his appearance, which certainly wasn't beautiful, as he had lost two toes on one foot, while his right wing had at some remote period been broken, and remained drooping forlornly, while he fluttered the other, and uttered a hoarse croak of satisfaction on beholding me.

I had fed the raven, and was engaged in settling a quarrel between him and Brian, in which "Malice," my raven, who was insanely jealous of the noble dog, endeavoured by all means in his power to provoke him to open hostilities, while Brian regarded the proceedings with a stately contempt.

I coaxed "Malice" into a deserted aviary, and was consoling Brian, when the bells pealing across the park warned me that if I would not rouse the pater's ire a second time that morning I must forthwith return to the house, and don my go-to-meeting bonnet.

Sir John leads the forlorn hope, I and Miss Bayly bring up the rear in decorous array.

Once in the "Squire's pew," I go through the formulas established by Act of Parliament with edifying solemnity, and the rector rolls out the sounding phrases about "miserable sinners" in a rich, comfortable voice, as though the description in no way applied to himself or the occupants of the Vernon pew, but were solely intended for the benefit of the poorer parishioners in the body of the church.

I did not venture to gratify my curiosity by glancing round the church until the pater had composed himself in his corner for the sermon and quiet meditation; by the way, Sir John *always* meditated with closed eyes. Then I cast a rapid, furtive glance across the pews, and my momentary survey assured me that the pew given over from time immemorial to the inhabitants of the Rectory, and left vacant ever since I can remember because the present holder of the comfortable living is a bachelor, now contained a single occupant.

Of course it was my hero of yesterday's romance. How grave and self-contained he looked now, as he noted the unaccustomed scene! Before I was aware our eyes met, and in his there was a gleam of recognition and amusement withal. What my eyes betrayed I cannot tell, but I was determined he should not learn much, so I cast them down demurely, and studied the pattern of the carpet in our pew during the remainder of the service.

We trailed out of church in single file, Sir John in front of me and Miss Bayly behind. I was wondering whether the pater would invite Mr. Fothergill to dinner, and for once in my life I wished he would, when I heard a well-remembered voice speaking to the rector, who was nearly at my side. As the owner of the voice passed us he raised his hat to Sir John and his party, and with another quick glance intended for me alone he was gone.

Mr. Fothergill joined my father. Yes, he was coming to dinner; and stray scraps of conversation of an utterly uninteresting nature reached my attentive ears. We had almost arrived at the hall door when the rector observed,—

"By-the-by, Sir John, Mr. Baroni, who was at church yesterday was glad to see, called upon me yesterday with a letter of introduction from my old college friend, Professor Maxom. His references are unexceptionable, and Maxom tells me that, young as he is, Mr. Adrian Baroni is already making his mark in his profession. Professor Maxom made some allusions as to his parentage being English, or partly so. The name, however, is decidedly Italian."

"The young man called upon me also with an introduction," rejoined the Pater. "He wants permission to make some studies in the park. The older portion of Vernon Towers is, he assures me, of very great archaeological interest, and he has a commission to make the drawings if I am inclined to give the required permission," he continued. "He struck me as being a very decent gentleman-like young fellow, but quite a foreign air, I thought. I did not give my consent too hastily; I had some idea of consulting you as to the advi-

ability of giving him the run of the place—the run of the place—for that is what it amounts to, Fothergill."

"Quite right, Sir John; one cannot be too careful," assented the Rector; "but it appears from Maxom's letter that Adrian Baroni has been staying for more than a month at his place in the Highlands, and that Lady Adelaide is delighted with him; in fact, I have received a glowing account, which, it is only fair to say, the manners and appearance of the young man quite justifies."

"Then," observed the Pater, dismissing the subject with his usual magnificence, "it will save me the annoyance of further interviews if you will kindly intimate to this—this Mr. Baroni that he is at liberty to make drawings of Vernon Towers at his own leisure and convenience. Possibly at some future date I may take an opportunity of asking him to dine with me."

"I gather that he is likely to make some stay in Fordham," remarked Mr. Fothergill, and I pricked up my ears as he fell back, and proceeded to politely devote himself to me and Miss Bayly.

That lady instituted some innocent inquiries regarding the artist, and Mr. Fothergill did his best to satisfy her. I gathered thereby that Mr. or Signor Baroni had been directed to Gaylord's Farm for lodgings, and also that the worthy and buxom Mrs. Gaylord had cheerfully consented to "take him in and do for him like a mother," as she remarked.

Further, that my new acquaintance thought of remaining in our lovely village for the rest of the summer, as he desired to become thoroughly familiar with English scenery, and thought he could not find a better locality for his purpose than Fordham and its vicinity.

All these preliminaries having been arranged, he only awaited the arrival of his artistic materials from London to set to work in good earnest.

CHAPTER III.

To this Sunday succeeded a week of dulness and disappointment. Mr. Baroni did not call upon Sir John again, neither did he avail himself of the stately permission and appear in the park, accompanied with all the paraphernalia of his art, as I had half expected.

My life seemed suddenly to have lost a something. Was it hope or anticipation, which I had really never possessed? I suppose it was the indescribable, passionate longing of youth for the sympathy and companionship of some one of the same age.

It opened up the splendid possibilities of the unknown before my longing eyes—that world from which I was shut out—of which I knew nothing; and from whence this foreign artist, had suddenly flashed upon Fordham like a bright particular star from some unknown system. If I could but hear him talk of his own life, and of Italy! He must have seen Venice, and Florence; while Rome, that summit of my girlish ambition, was his native city, so Mr. Fothergill said.

The end of a second week drew to its close, and I was gradually relapsing into my old train of moody, discontented thought; when the pater suddenly presented himself in the drawing-room one evening shortly before dinner, bringing with him, to my infinite astonishment, Signor Baroni and Mr. Fothergill.

I got through the needful introduction with a better grace than I could have imagined I should do. I think it was Adrian Baroni's perfect manner that helped to set me at ease, and we were soon chatting as cheerfully and naturally as it was possible for me to do under Sir John's severe, paternal eyes.

The dinner seemed for once to be quite a festive occasion, and all too short instead of too interminably long, as on other days. Now and again I noted those handsome violet eyes were turned my way during the progress of the meal, and though we said little to each other I felt instinctively that I had secured a friend.

It was not until the gentlemen joined us after dinner that the artist found an opportunity of speaking to me alone.

"Am I perfectly pardoned, Miss Vernon?" with a charming smile.

"For what, after all, was my own fault? I wonder *what* you thought of me?" I responded.

"I should be afraid to say on so short an acquaintance. Some day I may know you well enough to confess!"

"Then you must think dreadful things!" I uttered dolefully.

"Now you infer more than I thought, but I dare say this much; that I've longed to make a picture of you, enshrined in the branches of the chestnut, ever since the happy day on which we first met!" he answered.

I reddened under his earnest, impassioned gaze, and muttered rustily,—

"I was so shabby—how could you like that old brown velvet?" "Hypocrite that I was, had not his eyes told me I was beautiful to him in any dress."

"Was it old? I didn't know. I only saw a perfect harmony of gold and brown, with pure gray shadows and a background of dull greens."

"Mr. Fothergill didn't tell us you painted portraits!" I observed.

"Nor do I very often—only when a subject hits my fancy! I have two figure pictures, Roman girls, in your English Academy this year."

My respect for his talent increased enormously, and I demanded with anxiety,—

"Shall we see some of your pictures—may we?"

"Of course, I shall be only too happy! Do you know I never work so well as when a sympathetic critic is at my side. Will you be that for me during the time I am here?"

"But," I objected, "I am so horribly ignorant; what will you think of me? I've never been in London, and have seen no pictures save the Vernon portraits in the picture-gallery. I should be afraid to say a word about paintings to you—even if I thought them hideous!" I added, innocently.

Fortunately for me, my listener was young, with the ordinary failings of youth. No inordinate vanity made him supernaturally and abnormally sensitive to the suggestion of a slight. He only laughed a gay, honest laugh at my ingenuous confession, and answered,—

"But your opinion would be so much more valuable to me, because of its very honesty and innocence. It would at least be unsophisticated—not like the cut-and-dried speeches we poor painters are compelled to listen to from the fashionable frequenters of our studios. But since you have a picture gallery, you will exhibit its treasures to me, will you not?"

Before I could assent he had crossed the room to where the pater was boring poor Mr. Fothergill with a rare spider in spirits.

"Sir John, I am delighted to hear that you have a picture gallery. Family portraits are one of my weaknesses; and with your permission Miss Vernon has kindly offered to play the part of showman—show-woman I ought to say," flashing a smile at me.

"By all means—certainly. Ha, Miss Bayly," with a warning glance at that worthy; "your knowledge of the pictures is doubtless somewhat more comprehensive than that of Gladys, and you can give Mr. Baroni any information he may require," responded Sir John.

In spite of "prunes and prism," we managed to spend a delicious time among the pictures. I don't know how much Adrian Baroni looked at them, or listened to Miss Bayly's descriptions. But I know how much I looked at him, and remember distinctly the exquisite nonsense and laughter of that sunlit hour of idleness.

When we had almost made the tour of the gallery we stopped before an ancestor of mine—a gallant, courtly young fellow, wearing a dress of the period of the second Charles.

"I have an odd impression that I've seen

this face somewhere, Miss Vernon, and yet it's impossible. I never was in England before."

I looked at the cavalier and then at Adrian Baroni in sudden surprise.

"Well," said I, laughing; "if the face is familiar to you it must be because it is so like yourself. If you were only dressed like that and wore long hair, you would look as if you had stepped from the frame."

"Is it so, truly?" he questioned, falling back a little, and looking at the portrait with a new interest. "Then it must be one of those chance, inexplicable likenesses we see now and again, in life and in pictures."

"I think, Miss Vernon, I'll get such a costume and let my hair grow," with a comic glance at me.

"Do! I am sure you would look delightful!" I answered, with stupid honesty.

He laughed again.

"It is evident you have not been brought up in the school of compliments, and a genuine one is doubly charming."

"What have I done now? Something very silly?" I inquired, anxiously, as his amusement increased.

"No, indeed! You could never be silly!" he protested.

"What then? Why do you think me, as I see you do already—different from other people? I am told, day and night, that I'm silly and useless. If you think so too, tell me. I shan't care!" I protested, stoutly, though with a suddenly swelling heart.

"It is," he answered, in a lower tone, glancing at Mrs. Grundy in the person of Miss Bayly, "that I think you perfect and unapproachable in all you do and say."

I muttered some inaudible reply; and at this juncture the dragon of propriety interposed and carried us back to the drawing-room.

After the introductory episode of the dinner we slid imperceptibly into an intimacy that was freer and more unfettered than any intercourse I had ever imagined—an intimacy too, which Sir John, oddly enough, either ignored totally or considered beneath his notice. By some magical means as it seemed to me, Adrian Baroni became a privileged visitor: an *ami de la maison*, to whom our doors were never closed.

He was at work on a landscape in the Park for some time; and I was one day silently watching the picture grow from beneath his swift, skilful fingers, when he suddenly said,—

"Do you remember your promise to let me make a picture of you some time?"

"Did I promise? I forget," I answered, indifferently.

"Isn't that a little cruel of you, when I have been treasuring up the memory of that lovely 'study in brown and gold'?"

"A brown study doesn't sound very pretty. I think Miss Bayly might do very well for that. Look at her under the tree. Her hat is a lovely brown. I congratulate you on your choice, Mr. Baroni," said I, making him a profound courtesy, while we laughed over my elegant witticism. "Besides," I added, with the faintest approach to a pout. "If you want a model, no doubt you could easily find a better one. That Italian girl whose portrait you showed me yesterday is, I should imagine, lovely enough for anything."

I had been secretly fuming with jealousy ever since the previous day, when he innocently exhibited the unlucky sketch in question, and told me the original was a charming woman.

"She certainly is lovely—almost perfect," he assented, coolly, without looking up from his work.

"Then you can't care to paint me. I have no pretensions of that kind."

"Is that it?" with perfect *sang froid*, and a provoking smile. "Suppose something or somebody very different happens to suit me better, and be more desirable in my eyes than mere perfection?"

"You are only thinking how you can turn me to advantage in a picture. I believe art is everything with you," I answered, hotly.

"I did not think you would disappoint me,

at any rate," he returned, with a reproachful look.

"I am glad you were so sure of me. The wisest people are mistaken sometimes," haughtily.

"Am I to understand that in a double sense—to learn that I have been making a mistake all along, or have deceived myself?" in a low, grieved tone.

"Just as you please, if—"

"Gladys, my dear, do you know we have been out two hours, and shall belate for dinner if we do not return at once."

Thus Miss Bayly, who up to this moment had happily been absorbed in her book, regardless of the outer world and the pair who were getting up a desperate quarrel about nothing under her venerable nose.

There was no time to add a word, least of all to make up this pretty squabble. Adrian looked shocked, and a little hurt, and cast imploring glances at me as I prepared, with a slight rebellious shrug of my shoulders, to follow Miss Bayly.

"At least you will say good-bye?" in his softest, most musical tones.

"Certainly, if that is all you want. I could have said that half-an-hour ago," was my pert rejoinder, as I fled without waiting to see the result of my parting shot.

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT morning I was up before six, in a thoroughly bad humour with myself and the world. In this agreeable mood I started for an early walk, with dear old Brian as my sole companion.

At this hour I was sure of solitude. The fair Bayly was still enjoying her maiden dreams, and as I knew from experience it took her a considerable period to sacrifice to the graces when she arose, I was tolerably certain of two clear hours of freedom.

The freshness of the morning air and Brian's faithful, lumbering joy in my society speedily contrived to raise my mercurial spirits, and we started for a race down the park, both of us in high glee. I ran until I was breathless and weary, and was at length obliged to sit down to rest and laugh at Brian's elephantine gambols.

I was aware before long that my movements were observed by someone in an adjoining field, and I beheld a stalwart form spring lightly over the dividing fence, and approach in leisurely fashion.

"Is it to be still in anger?" he smiled, holding out his hand.

I touched the warm fingers limply, and said nothing.

"Am I to go away? Don't tell me so this morning, when I have so much to say; and this," he added, "is such a famous opportunity for walking and talking."

"Oh no!" I answered, hastily, "if you care to walk with us. We weren't doing anything particular—I and Brian."

"If I have your permission I shall not greatly trouble about Brian's," he said, gravely.

We stopped, and I looked at him for an instant. The contagion of his cheerfulness and good humour was irresistible. We both laughed at his mild little joke, and walked on in the best possible humour with each other and the morning.

"The cloud has quite cleared away?" he asked.

"Quite. Do you want me to say any more?"

"Not another word! But I should like the outward and visible token of your forgiveness all the same."

"And that?" I queried.

"That you sit to me for the portrait, of course."

"If you care—if you really wish—" I began, slowly.

"Hush! You know I do care. You even guess, I believe, how much your least word is to me. Can you understand how you've

brought the sunshine into what has hitherto been a sunless, though a successful life?"

"Have I?" I asked, in wonder. "I don't understand how I, who know so little, have seen nothing, can do the least thing to help you, who have so many friends; and must have seen many women, unlike me in every way."

"Heaven knows I have—women and to spare!" he answered, with sudden bitterness. "But none of them could ever help me in the way I most need help, or give me the one thing my life lacks."

"What is that?" said I, innocently.

"It is the love of a pure-souled, innocent woman!" he answered, fervently; and, seizing my hands with a quick movement, he covered the little, trembling fingers with warm, passionate kisses.

He dropped them almost as quickly as he had possessed himself of them; and, moving back a step, said,—

"It is too late to say pardon me; yet I have done you a great wrong. I was mad, tempted beyond my strength for the moment."

"It is no wrong!" I protested, hotly, and stopped short, conscious that my face was burning, and my heart beating furiously with a keen, new joy I had never tasted before. "If—if you care for me how can it be wrong to tell me so?" I asked, at last.

"It is wrong, though I love you insanely, though all my love for the future centres in you. I can never go away now, feeling that I must leave you behind me. I could die for your pleasure or your good, or live to spend my life in your service," he went on, with a low, deep intonation in that rarely lovely voice of his. "But," and here comes the terrible "but" with power to sever us, "you are Sir John Vernon's only child—the last of a noble name, while I am but a nameless, wandering artist! Gladys, may I say that precious name this once? Do you know I have no right even to the name I bear?"

"Well," I uttered, slowly, "and what then?"

"Is not that enough to show you, innocent even as you are, that I have done an utterly unworthy thing? *Not in loving you*, for who could see you and help it, but in daring to speak of it to you. I am bitterly ashamed!"

"Listen, then," said I, conquering my shyness, and gathering courage to go on resolutely; "if my father were twenty times Sir John Vernon, and I had the wealth I have not got—for we are poor, miserably poor, save for some property of my mother's—it could not alter this, that I love you! If you want me; indeed, care to have this ignorant, useless, little me, when you are so wise, and good, and clever, why I am your own—just that, and no earthly thing can take me away!"

My hands were in his again. Somehow his brave, handsome head was bent over me, and those eloquent lips were perilously near mine now, as I continued: "I am quite ignorant of the world and life beyond this house; but I have not lived a lonely, neglected girl, whose heart was breaking for a little love, without learning something of myself. The only companion I've had you know," with a pathetic little break in my voice, answered instantly by a tender pressure of the hands he holds in his strong fingers. "And what I am now I shall be as the years go on. All I am and can feel will be strengthened and deepened by time. What you are I begin to know. Begin! It seems as if I had known you always!" I added, with shy pride. "But I never thought you would love me."

"No!" he answered, fondly. "You knew yourself so well; there was nothing lovable in you! Darling—my one love!" he went on, "for your precious sake I will conquer fate and win fame; and with fame, a much lower thing, but not to be despised, because it will give me the right to claim you for my own. My love! my pride! if only you will be brave and patient—your sweet eyes tell me you will—in a year, dear love, two years at most, I can come back to you. Meanwhile you shall not bind yourself by a word. You shall

be free. But I, living or dying, shall be yours, my Gladys."

"Of what use will freedom be without you?"

"I will ask nothing of my sweet love now," he repeated, "have one kiss to live on, to treasure till I can bring you something worth taking in return, though nothing this world holds is good enough for you," he said, fondly, bending the kingly head for the "one kiss."

The first kiss of a woman's first lover! Is anything on earth sweeter or more sacred? I feel the exquisite thrill even now, as his passionate lips met mine and clung to them, while his strong, tender arm held me fast in that first embrace.

We decided, as we walked back, that we must be very wise, sober, and discreet, as be-seemed two old people, whose united ages were considerably under half a century.

Adrian had sketched a rapid plan of going through the desperate ordeal of telling Sir John what had happened, and then the mere formula of asking his consent. We were absolutely certain of the result, and then—a terrible pause, filled with awful thoughts for both of us—Adrian must go away, and for two years we should see and hear nothing of each other, or know—unless by some merciful chance—how the other fared.

As we approached the park gates, and Vernon Towers loomed before us, all my newly-acquired courage seemed to have retreated into the recesses of my shoes, and to be slowly oozing out of those fastenings even, as I realized but faintly a twentieth part of what my life would be without my lover.

"I must go in, it's growing dreadfully late," I muttered, in an unsteady voice.

"Is it?" said Adrian, looking at his watch. "I thought we had only been out about five minutes."

"Yes," said I, pulling down his hand that hid the watch from me; "but before I go in I must tell you of my plan."

He caught the hand that touched his, and drawing it through his arm we turned into the avenue again.

"I scarcely know how to begin. I am afraid you should think me dishonest or deceitful."

"Hush! you are mine, and must tell me all your thoughts now without fear, and we will consult together," he said, softly.

"I want you to say nothing to the pater yet—not yet, please," reluctantly.

"But, my dearest, it must be some time, and I sin against you in delaying."

"I know; still, for my sake, to please me. Won't you wait until your return from Italy, since you say you must go so soon?"

"Doubting me already!" with a smile.

"No; not that, only a foolish superstitious fear I can't explain. I want to look forward to your return, to seeing you once—only once—more before the long parting we are trying to picture to ourselves."

"I almost think you are right; anyway it shall be as you wish, darling; not that I want to prove you or myself, but your plan will defer the evil day. All the time I am in Rome I shall be longing for the sound of your voice, the first glimpse of your sweet face—a glimpse you will contrive I shall have quite to myself when I return." He caught me again in his arms. "It is good-bye now, sweet one. We shall not—ought not, to meet again like this before I go," and he murmured broken words of love and tenderness, hope and faith, while he covered my burning lips and cheeks with hot kisses.

"You must stop, Adrian! Let me go this instant!" I commanded, with a feeble attempt at dignity.

"In a moment, beloved; it is so hard," he pleaded; but he released me at length, and I hurried in, my heart throbbing tumultuously with a wild exultation I was not learned enough to analyse. I only knew we loved each other, and that the world had grown fairer and brighter to me for evermore.

Rebukes fell on a dull ear that day, and my

inward tranquillity was unruined. Henceforth all the pater's bullyings and cold neglect, and Miss Bayly's wearisome lectures and eternal sickening propriety would be powerless to inflict a single pang on a heart filled to overflowing with love and gladness, as mine was.

Adrian Baroni paid us a formal farewell visit, during which he carefully impressed upon Sir John the fact of his probable return within a month or six weeks. In answer to Miss Bayly's inquiries he was more explicit, telling her that his adopted father wished to see him on some business, the precise nature of which he was as yet ignorant of, but he did not anticipate that it would delay him very long in Rome. He hoped not, he added, as he was anxious to return to Fordham before the autumn was far advanced, and by the 6th of October he should look forward to seeing his English friends again.

CHAPTER V.

THE long, weary month of my lover's absence drew to a close, and as the days went on, and I grew more feverishly anxious, I used to visit our trying place in the park with the utmost regularity, hoping wildly for the possibility of his return before the appointed time.

On a glorious autumn afternoon, the last day of September, I ascended to my old retreat in the branches of the chestnut, laden with a weighty book, the "Lives of the Italian painters," and speedily became absorbed in the story of Fra Lippo Lippi and his love.

"Gladys, Gladys!" an intense voice, scarcely louder than a whisper, broke in upon the autumn stillness and that entrancing story.

I leaned over the wall, scarcely believing my own ears.

"Adrian!" in a tone of joy and surprise. "Really you, and back so soon?"

It had seemed ages to me until that moment; but the delight, the overmastering joy that rushed to heart, to lips, and eyes, faded at sight of his face! I stooped still lower, the handsome head was only just below me, the exquisite face was looking up to mine. Was it stricken to stone with a nameless horror—with an awful fear that I had never seen in the violet eyes before!

An unspeakable terror froze my very blood, and the sudden revulsion of feeling must have made me deathly white, for while I leaned and gazed at him with parted lips, he uttered in a strange, breathless tone,—

"Gladys, you—you must not faint! Be brave, my dar—be brave as you have ever been. You will need it now. Help me, Gladys—help me, or life is too hideous to endure!"

His tone of anguish and entreaty wrung my heart. I implored him to speak, to tell me what had happened, but he only answered that he must write the thing he had to say, the horror of it was unspeakable, and I should know before night if I would have pity and patience.

"Adrian, say, have you seen my father?"

"Not yet. Oh Heaven! but I must. Pray ask me nothing more."

A dreadful pause followed. A hideous silence, during which he did not offer to move one step nearer, or to touch me with lips or hand. He only looked at me, just out of reach, with a mad, unspeakable fear mingled with love and anguish in those dear eyes of his.

"Say something to comfort me," I whispered.

"I would die to comfort you, but it cannot be! If I had loved you any less it would be easier. Hundreds of times in this hideous month I've looked at the devilish truth every way to make a loophole of escape for you. I thought once to die like a coward and make no sign, but knowing you, your own brave soul,

I felt you must hear all—and—and I—I was forced to see you once again."

I sat cold and silent; cold with the chill of death; full of a blind amaze, but never guessing at the truth.

"How will you bear the future, Gladys? Try to think the worst of my sufferings will be for you—you, whom—Heaven forgive me!—I had hoped to make so happy!"

I covered my face with my hands to shut out the blinding grief, and I heard him say,—

"Gladys, I only ask you to do this much for me. Trust in me now, and forget me hereafter."

When I removed my hands and looked up he was gone.

I waited there until I had gained some composure and the strength to drag myself back to the house. Once there I went up to my little sitting-room, and shut and locked the door. I felt safer so. I wanted to be quite alone with my grief and my own soul to think things over and try to comprehend. I sat there until the autumn afternoon faded into a dull twilight, and the golden promise of the earlier day ended in a wet and stormy evening, with lurid threatenings in the western sky.

I had just begun to wonder why I had not received the promised explanation from Adrian, and to feel a new vague terror that his interview with my father was so unduly prolonged—as it must have been, when a step outside set my heart pulsing furiously, and Sir John's voice said,—

"Gladys, open the door!" I obeyed in silence, and stood with clasped, trembling hands awaiting my doom with a desperate courage.

"Sit down, my dear, sit down. You seem distressed. I have some news for you—good news."

I sat down trembling more violently than ever.

"There is nothing to alarm you, Gladys! nothing," he repeated. "I came to bring you the news myself, solely from feelings of kindness." His slow tones—though a subtle current of agitation seemed to stir them, and underlie his whole demeanour to-day—nearly maddened me; but I looked at him mutely, struck, I suppose, by the wild expression of my face, he went on more quickly.

"It is difficult to enter into explanations, perhaps; but I have come to tell you that although I have long believed you to be my only living child, you have a brother! My first wife died in Italy when—"

"Adrian! Father, say it is not Adrian!" I exclaimed, with a wild, piercing shriek, as I rushed forward, only to fall heavily into my father's arms, deaf and blind and senseless—stricken to the heart.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN I opened my eyes again and returned to life and consciousness, I was in a room I had never seen before. It was large and airy; the venetian blinds were down, but a cold, bright sun seemed to pierce through and flood the room with subdued light. The window farthest from my bed was open a little way, and I fancied I heard the soothing splash of waves outside. I moved slightly, and thus attracted the attention of nurse Margaret who came to my side, saying, softly,—

"Lie still, Miss Gladys, my darling, you are almost well now!"

I made no attempt to reply; and I obeyed her injunctions simply from lack of ability to do anything else, while she fed me with a spoonful or two of jelly as I lay there placid and all-incapable of thought or recollection, as it seemed to me afterwards.

I looked at Margaret. Her bright-brown hair was strangely streaked with grey. Had it always been so? I tried to ask myself. Her comely face, too, was pinched and wan—Nurse Margaret with a difference. But the room was yet more strange than Margaret's

face. How we came there, and why we came were questions I was too weak to ask.

It might have been a day or a week that I continued in this blissful condition—I could not tell. The doctor seemed to fit in and out like a homely professional apparition. At least I took it for the doctor—a kindly face that bent above my bed, and a soft, cool hand that touched my wrist, and asked a few lout-toned questions of Margaret.

But by faint and slow degrees I grew stronger, and, with returning strength, memory came flooding back in waves that ebbed and flowed. Sometimes I thought I understood distinctly, and was dumb with misery that froze my very heart. And then, sensation and memory slowly ebbed away, leaving a blank, a calm that was not peace.

"Margaret, where are we?"

This was one morning about a week after I awoke from the long delirium of fever.

"At Landino, my dear!" A pause—during which she was visibly agitated, while I was unnaturally calm and still.

"Only tell me—what I ask—nothing more."

"My sweet one, my precious child!" she began, "please not to talk just now. When you are well and strong, I will answer all or any questions you may wish to ask."

I smiled weakly.

"I only want to know where my hair is?"

"It had to be cut off, dear; but it will soon grow again! It is coming into the loveliest curls now."

"Have I been ill, then, Margaret?"

"You have been ill, my dear one," she answered, evasively. "But you will soon be quite strong, and the doctor says you are coming on famously."

To which I answered, piteously,—

"Then why didn't you let me die?" and hid my face.

Thus the late autumn days drew on in dull pain and weakness, in silence and despair.

By degrees I was able to go out a little; in a chair at first, and then with the strong support of Margaret's arm. The first morning that I walked down to the beach without help I determined to ask the question I had so long and so resolutely thrust aside. For, with returning strength the old craving awoke and mastered me. I dropped listlessly on the heap of shawls Margaret had arranged for me in a cosy nook that looked seaward, and called her to my side.

"Tell me exactly, and as shortly as you can, what happened—when he saw Sir John—what proof there is—that it isn't all a hideous mistake, and when did he (I couldn't speak Adrian's name) first know the truth?"

"Miss Gladys, my dear, you must not hear yet—you cannot bear it!" she answered, trembling.

"Margaret, I swear to you that if you do not tell me, at once, I will drag myself back to that hateful place, if I die in doing it, and demand the truth of Sir John Vernon!"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, in frightened tones. "You shall hear, my precious nursing; I can deny you nothing."

"The bitterest anguish of my life is past," I said, slowly, "and just to hear all can do no harm."

"I dread telling you—but if it must be it must. It appears, from what Sir John and Mr. Baroni together, afterwards told me, that Mr. Adrian went up to the Towers on that evening—you recollect?" I nodded assent.

"And asked for Sir John, who returned for answer that he was engaged; but would be delighted to see Mr. Baroni next day. Mr. Adrian—I can't call him Mr. Vernon yet—returned that his business was important, and concerned Sir John himself. With that he was shown into the library, where Sir John received him, not in the best of tempers; but all his importance and fussiness vanished when Mr. Adrian plunged straight into the subject, and explained that the hasty visit he had just paid to Italy was in response to an urgent request from his father by adoption that he would spend his twenty-fifth birthday

with him, as he had documents to give him which had been confided to his care by Mr. Adrian's mother, with strict injunctions that they should on no account be opened before that date. In event of Mr. Adrian's death the papers were to be burnt. It appears, this Italian gentleman kept his promise to the dying lady most sacredly, and had, in all respects, treated the child as his own son, being all the time totally ignorant of his parentage, or whether he was the son of an Italian beggar or an English Duke. So—you are turning faint, Miss Gladys?"

"Never mind me—give me some wine, and go on!"

"Well, then, Mr. Adrian returned to Italy, never dreaming of the revelations about to be made. These papers contained the marriage certificate of John Vernon and Emilia Fairleigh and the certificate of their child's birth, dated two years after, in Italy. Then followed a mass of correspondence. The pair seemed happy at first; but violent quarrels and jealousy followed, and they decided to separate within a few months after Mr. Adrian's birth, Lady Vernon taking the infant. She seems to have been a proud, high-spirited lady, though she was only an actress before Sir John married her, and he was wildly in love with her and madly jealous. Neither side would yield an inch, and she left him, declaring she would die sooner than lift a finger to prove her innocence, and they never saw each other again. She died in a year after, and the news of her death was sent to Sir John, who came to Italy directly, to find his wife buried, and no trace of the child she left. She had wilfully designed to punish her husband for his injustice, and shortly before her death gave the child into the charge of Mr. Baroni's care, with all the papers relating to his parentage, and went away to a distant city to die—Mantua, I believe. Sir John returned to England a soured, disappointed man, and shortly afterwards married Miss Fanshaw—the late Lady Vernon."

"Why did this hateful woman ever wish the truth to be known?" I asked, bitterly.

"She seemed to think she should do herself a great injustice if she allowed a stain to rest on his mother's name, when she had it in her power to remove it. So she wrote out all the circumstances, but desired Mr. Adrian to be kept in ignorance until he was of full age, and his character formed either for good or evil. She also hoped, she said—that at the age of twenty-five, he would be in a good position, and independent of the father to whom he owed neither duty nor respect. This is all I know, my dear—save that Sir John and his son parted on bad terms, and the latter returned to Italy at once—though Sir John seemed to idolize him—telling his father he could almost curse him for the very fact of his existence. Everything," he said, "connected with Vernon Towers was fraught with such hideous memories for him. He added that had it not been for your sake, he would never have returned. For all the rest he was reckless."

"And so we dare to play with souls," I groaned. "Just for the sake of revenge his mother brought this unspeakable curse upon him! Oh, I hate her, I hate them all."

A long silence followed, broken by nurse's voice, saying,—

"Your illness and the agony I have endured in seeing my darling suffer, has taught me the folly of tempting fate."

The mental strain of the morning had fatigued me more than I knew, and I fell asleep on the couch directly we returned to our rooms. On awakening I was conscious of a strange elation and a sudden access of strength, which was almost a return of fever. The excitement made my eyes and cheeks brighter than Margaret had seen them for weeks. She mistook the cause entirely; and with the double intention of giving me consolation and relieving her own over-burdened heart, she began to talk to me again in the afternoon, scarcely conscious of my utter antipathy for

further revelations. I was lying on a couch by the window, and Margaret took the low chair at my side.

"I really do feel wonderfully better," I said, in answer to her anxious inquiry. "I lack nothing, save the desire to live."

"Would you welcome any change in life, loss of position, and wealth even, if it made your present state seem less terrible?"

"Why do you ask? Can I, by sheer desire, work a miracle that you talk thus? I would give my own soul, almost, to change places with a beggar," I answered, impatiently.

"No miracle, my dear; but during your long, dreadful illness, I've brooded over the past, and the revelation the present has made, till I've resolved to speak out what I never thought to tell to living soul, you least of all. The thought has been horrible to me—repulsive that, in trying to make you some reparation, I should earn only your scorn and hatred. If all the world despised me I would keep your love, but I must speak, come what may."

"Have you, too, wronged me?" I asked, thunderstruck. "Never mind, nothing can matter now. You are all I have left in the world, and I shall never hate you, Margaret."

"Bless you, my own, for those words!" she cried, raising kisses and tears on my wasted hands. "You give me courage to go on. Listen, Gladys, you may think of your lover, since he is so dear, without sin. He is not akin to you in the remotest degree."

"Margaret, is this thing true?" I rose up, trembling and flushing in wild amazement.

"As true, I swear to you, my darling, as it is true that you are my own beautiful daughter, Gladys Davis!—as true as there is a Heaven above us to hear me now."

I unclopped my arms and fell back stunned; while for a minute—Margaret, my mother—held me in so fervent an embrace that I could scarcely breathe.

"Speak, Gladys," she implored; "only a word to say you forgive your mother, your guilty mother."

"I forgive you, mother!" I answered slowly, "and am unspeakably thankful. But we must confess the whole—the wicked deception to Sir John Vernon—directly I am able to go with you, for I must share all that falls upon my mother. My joy and thankfulness overpower all other feelings—even some natural resentment that I have been made the innocent participator in so terrible a cheat."

My poor, penitent mother knelt by my side, weeping and praying to Heaven for pardon; while she told me how she had been tempted to change her own baby for Lady Vernon's sickly child, the suggestion coming, in the first instance, from that lady, who, seeing that her baby could not live, implored Margaret (then the head keeper's wife, and living in a cottage in the park) to aid her in outwitting her half-brother, with whom she was at deadly feud, and to whom the Fanshaw property must revert in the case of her child's death. Lady Vernon was then a confirmed invalid; and Margaret, between affection for her mistress and a natural desire to advance her own child, consented. The deception was easily carried out, as Margaret had the puffy infant to nurse with her own; and when it died, after three feeble months of existence, it was buried as the child of Margaret and David Davies.

My father, dying early by an accident, Margaret returned to the Towers with me, where we had remained ever since. She told me it seemed less difficult to accede to Lady Vernon's wicked proposal when she saw that Lady Vernon herself was not likely to live long, and therefore, that her child would remain her own, indeed, with no one to control or interfere.

This strange confession ended, I begged my mother, for so I must henceforth call her, to leave me quite alone for some time, to enable me to recover a little from the furious excitement of the day, an excitement that was in itself almost killing for me as feeble and reduced as I was.

When my mother returned to the room, she was equipped for a journey, and, in answer to



[THE FIRST KISS OF A WOMAN'S FIRST LOVER.]

my look of surprise, she told me, in a few words, that she had decided, now the fatal plunge was taken, not to keep the truth from Sir John Vernon a minute longer than was necessary, and that she was about to start that evening. She hoped, she added, to rejoin me in a few days, when she knew my mind would be more at rest when her confession had been made full and absolute. She had provided for my comfort during her absence by securing the services of a skilful nurse, highly recommended by our good doctor.

"I shall die in peace now, mother; there is no time to lose, I feel assured. Only come back to me before the end," were my parting words.

I was at peace—almost. Life seemed to be ebbing slowly away, and I had no care to live. All was over for me, I thought. Once, when they fancied I slept, I heard the nurse ask Dr. Debenham,—

"Do you think she can recover?" and his answer,—

"Here is such a magnificent constitution that all things are possible to a woman so blest. If only we could find an interest in life for her, something—a mere straw would do to cling to—we could save her yet. As it is—" and there was a significant pause.

Aye! that was it, they could not bring me back the one thing that had power to save me, and put fresh life in my wearied soul. Without that, the learning of the ages, backed by all the inventions of modern science, were unavailing. I felt myself slipping quietly out of reach. Out of extreme pain and weakness had won peace.

My mother returned one morning during this period of waiting for release. She stooped over my bed, with her comely face absolutely transfigured by an excess of maternal love and tenderness.

"My Gladys," she uttered, softly, "I have come back, darling."

I smiled a wan smile, and put out a feeble hand. "Just in time, dear mother."

She looked at me, long and anxiously, and then said: "Dr. Debenham wants to try a new cure; one I have brought. May he?"

"If you like, mother; but for me, I only want to be let alone," I answered, painfully.

For reply she went out of the room, and returned with the doctor, who, after examining me with his wonted care, said gravely,—

"We can only try. Mind, I make the experiment as a forlorn hope."

Then bidding me endeavour to sleep, they went away, after administering a restorative.

I closed my eyes, but a faint, unusual excitement kept me awake, and I fell into a quiet reverie, a dream of release.

A slight stir, or step, was it, aroused me, and I unclosed my eyes, still void of hope or expectation, to see—

My true love, my own, kneeling by my side!

His eyes met mine, his dear lips, white and trembling with suppressed joy and longing, were close—close to my wasted cheek. I felt his warm breath, and knew in that supreme moment that I lived indeed!

The boon for which I dared not pray had come to me. He, my life, was come, and now I knew I should not die.

"Gladys!" the beloved voice said, and my heart leapt to hear it, as I answered: "Mine own," too faintly for anyone save a lover to hear.

Our lips met. There was no need of any words; and after the first, solemn, reverent pressure of his lips on mine, the dear head rested on the pillow beside me, and we were silent with the joy that is too deep and sacred for human speech.

I could hear his throbbing heart, and my poor feeble, little hand lay in his, so full of life and strength, but still we spoke no word.

The past was swept away, obliterated by the mighty, incoming wave of life and love, and a golden future shone before us—a future glowing with love, and hope, and faith.

Need I tell how I slowly, but certainly, won back health and strength inch by inch, with

Adrian ever at my side; or how Dr. Debenham's experiment proved an entirely successful one?

"And so our story ends," I laughed, softly, as we stood on the rocks to watch the sunset over sea one winter evening.

"They were married and lived happy ever afterwards."

"I think the best of our story is just beginning," he answered, as he touched the short, clustering curls belonging to the head that lay upon his breast, with a tender hand.

"It was as Gladys Vernon I first knew and loved my love, and—"

"And I shall still be Gladys Vernon to the end of the chapter," I continued, smiling up at him through soft, delicious tears.

"Gladys Vernon, true love, and perfect wife," he answered fervently.

And so we wandered home through the twilight, hand in hand, to begin the new life together, and live the unwritten story—Side by Side.

[THE END.]

THE difficulties of education lie deeper down than the curriculum. It is not so much finding out what to teach that is needful; the all important thing is how to develop the mental and moral energies.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON.—Young married people are surprised when they discover that the honeymoon is not entirely composed of honey. Even the first year of married life is not always the happiest, though if ought always to be very happy. Living together happily is an art which the most affectionate couple cannot ordinarily learn in a year. Each has to make some unpleasant discoveries, and to overcome some fixed inclinations. True happiness begins when these discoveries have been made, and each is thoroughly resolved to make the other as happy as possible for all time.

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["TERENCE, I LOVE YOU," SHE ANSWERED, HASTILY; "NOW TELL ME YOUR NEWS."]

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTERS.

The clock at Wingfield Parsonage—the long sentry-box clock, which stood in the quaint old oak-panelled hall—had just struck eleven as Maggie Randal flew up the trim gravel path leading to the house, and swung herself lightly through the open window into the dingy parlour, where her three sisters were sitting, busily engaged shaping and stitching flannel garments for their father's poor parishioners.

"Girls, girls, what do you think? Such grand news!" she cried, her violet eyes dancing and sparkling with delight, her little scarlet mouth quivering with excitement.

"We can't think, Mag, we have too much to do. Tell us what it is?" responded her eldest sister, Kate, lifting her plain, good-natured face, and smiling at her interlocutor.

"No, no; you must guess."

"How can we guess?" demanded Maud, the second of Mr. Randal's children, fastening her blue eyes on Maggie's face, with a look that was not altogether cordial. "We can't run about Wingfield all the morning gossiping and chatting, hearing the bits of scandal and news. We know next to nothing of what is going on there, so—"

"Well you needn't be cross about it!" interrupted the baby of the family, with a toss of her little fair head, in whose soft rings and curls a rich, gold shade lurked.

"I'm not cross," responded the other; "but it's quite impossible to know what your news is. Mrs. Bell may be the mother of a family; Miss Lynch may have made advances to Laura's young man again; or, perhaps, happy thought, the Baines are going to give another tea shuffle."

"Pooh! it's something much more important than that!"

"What is it, then?"

"Guess once more."

"I can't. Tell, Mag?"

"Well," replied the young girl, with an air of great importance; "well, the Molyneuxs are coming back from Italy, and the Hall is being furnished up grandly! What do you think of that?"

"Think! Why I think it is a splendid bit of news!" cried Maud, joyously, while Kate, and even quiet Laura, ejaculated "Oh!" and "Really!" and looked elated.

"Who told you?"

"Mrs. Britten."

"That is good authority."

"Yes. As she is their housekeeper, I suppose she ought to know."

"Of course! When do they come?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"So soon! That will be delightful!"

"Won't it be glorious! We shall have some fun and gaiety now, I hope, to wake up this dull little spot."

"I hope so, I'm sure. But I don't quite see why you should be so excited about it, Mag."

"Why?"

"Because you are already engaged, therefore debarred from entering in the race for the catch of the county," replied Maud, her eyes resting once more somewhat coldly on her younger sister's lovely, blonde face.

"Who said I was going to join in the race?" demanded Maggie, angrily. "Because I have promised to marry Terence O'Hara, is that any reason why I should be shut out from dances and tennis parties, and amusements that all girls like?"

"Of course not! Only engaged people, when they really love one another, don't care, I fancy, for going out much, or for anything save billing and cooing in dim, quiet corners. Perhaps, though, my dear, you are an exception to the rule," she concluded, with a little spiteful laugh.

"Perhaps I am," retorted the youngest Miss Randal, sharply, with heightened colour and flashing eyes. "At any rate, I don't intend to refuse any invitations I may get to the Hall, whether Terence be asked or not."

"I didn't imagine you would."

"Do they intend to remain in England now for good?" inquired Laura, anxious to avert the storm of words she saw impending between the two sisters, who shared the beauty of the family between them.

"Yes," answered Maggie, easily diverted from her wrath and indignation. "Sir Lionel, Mrs. Britton says, is quite strong now. Ten years in the South has cured the weakness of his lungs; and as he is eager to live on the estate, and do his duty as a landowner, they will remain here for good, unless, of course, he finds the climate too severe for him."

"I wonder if Eunice will be glad to get back to England?"

"I am sure she will," observed Kate. "She is too strong and vigorous to care for the languid life of the South."

"Has she written to you lately?"

"Not for a whole year!"

"Then perhaps they don't intend to be on the same friendly terms with us that they used to be," said Maggie, dolefully.

"I hope they will be," cried Maud, quickly. "We found the difference when they went away. Lady Molyneux was so generous, always sending us presents. I devoutly hope she will continue to charitably remember 'the poor at her gates,' and send us fruit, flowers, and game."

"They won't be her 'gates' now. Sir Lionel was fifteen when they went away; he is five-and-twenty at the present time, and of course master. He may not be charitably disposed."

"We must subjugate him, then," replied Maud, complacently, looking at herself in the little old-fashioned mirror hanging over the

mantel-shelf, and appearing quite satisfied with what she saw.

"It may be a hard task. His mother will perhaps object to his subjugation."

"Do you really think she would, Kate? Why I thought his word was law, and that as a boy every whim and fancy was gratified."

"So they were; but there was a reason for denying him nothing."

"What was it?"

"Well, if I tell you," said Kate, rather reluctantly, as she rolled up her work and proceeded to help Laura to spread the cloth for dinner, "you must promise never to breathe a word to any one about it."

"We promise!" cried her sisters.

"Then the reason is, that there is madness in the Molyneux family. It breaks out in every other generation, and invariably among the male members. There has never been a woman of the family known to go mad. It is due to appear in the present generation, and Lady Molyneux was warned by their medical man to neither cross nor refuse anything to her only son, as the result of any mental annoyance or trouble would be fatal to his sanity."

"How dreadful!" ejaculated Laura.

"I suppose, then, by this time he is rather an insufferable specimen of humanity, having been such a spoiled child," remarked Maud, reflectively.

"I hardly think so," answered Miss Randal.

"He was very sweet-tempered as a boy—of a most amiable and lovable disposition, one not easily spoiled."

"Let us hope he is still so. It will give us a better chance of benefiting by their return. And now, girls," she added, as their once rather ancient and broken-down retainer, Anne, entered the room, bearing a dish, on which was a veritable, grim scrag of cold mutton, garnished with overgrown lettuces, "we will discuss our frugal repast. Rather more frugal than usual, I may premise, owing to the absence of our parent, who has the good fortune to be luncheon with Mr. Travers, and therefore escapes the respectable middle-class pauper's usual dinner of cold mutton;" and with a gay laugh Maud seated herself at the table, and commenced eating substantial slices of bread from a huge homemade loaf.

Her sisters followed suit, smiling at her remarks, and soon the grim scrag disappeared, or the greater part of it, for health and spare diet made them relish anything, and, above all, they were not accustomed to hunchbacks or dainties. Their father, and sole surviving parent, the Rev. John Randal, was not overburdened with this world's goods. He was rector of the small country parish of Wingfield, beautifully situated amidst verdant valleys, winding streams, and green hills, five miles from the thriving town of Inghfield.

The living was a poor one, and Mr. Randal was a studious, religious man, giving all he could, and more, perhaps, than he actually ought to have, to his poverty-stricken parishioners—poverty-stricken and neglected through the absence of the owner of the land, Sir Lionel Molyneux, and the greed of his agent, a hard, grasping man, who ground down the tenants, exacting the rent from them the day it was due to the uttermost farthing, and never giving them at Christmas, or during the coldest winter, so much even as a pair of blankets, a bundle of flannel, or a load of wood.

The rector did his best to supply the wants of his poor people, plying his vocation with an earnest godliness that won him the affection and respect of all who knew him. He adhered strictly to all the duties of his sacred calling, and spared himself in no way. He could not afford a curate, so the work fell heavily on him. He was helped as much as possible by Kate, his eldest child, a plain, sensible girl of twenty-seven, and by Laura, his third daughter, some five years her junior, who threw her whole heart and soul into the parish work, the Sunday-school, and everything connected with the church, because she had a "calling" that way, and also because she was engaged to

be married to Walter Lander, curate to Mr. Travers, rector of a neighboring parish, and as she had foreworn dancing, party-going, high heels, gay dresses, fringed hair, and all the other pomps and vanities of this wicked world, she occupied her time in doing good and qualifying for a parson's wife. From his second and fourth daughters Mr. Randal did not receive much help; though Maud, who was very clever with her needle, occasionally, when she was not engaged in making dainty dresses of an inexpensive kind for herself, or her two sisters, who still attired themselves in a modish fashion, helped to stitch wonderful little flannel garments for the ever-arriving, ever-unwelcome babies of the parishioners; but Maggie, just in her seventeenth year, violet-eyed, golden haired Maggie, so like the wife he had loved and lost three years after her birth, never had given any help, and probably never would. She was a butterfly—a gay, brilliant butterfly—able only to live in the sunshine, and lead an idle, useless life. She had been spoiled by Kate and her father, and her brilliant beauty seemed to unfit her for any rough work, any useful occupation. Notwithstanding their poverty, she always wore bright, dainty dresses, made for her by Maud, who was somewhat jealous of the young sister, nine years her junior, whose glowing loveliness eclipsed her good looks, and made them fade into insignificance.

The second Miss Randal, though, was a very pretty girl. Her eyes were blue as summer skies, her hair a pretty flaxen, her skin beautifully fair; yet what are blue eyes compared to violet, that wonderful violet that seems of a velvety blackness sometimes!—and what does flaxen hair look like beside those rich corn-coloured tresses we see adorning the heads of some favoured mortals! Then the colouring of Maggie's skin was richer and fresher, and about every gesture and action was a nameless charm, a girlish grace, that made her irresistible to male members of the community, and gave her sister cause for jealousy.

This jealousy had not, however, given much outward and visible sign until the previous autumn, when Terence O'Hara, an artist, had come to Wingfield to sketch some pretty bits of scenery, and had made the acquaintance of the rector, and was in due course introduced to his daughters. The young Irishman showed somewhat plainly that he admired Maud, paying her marked attentions; and that rather vain young woman had vicious floating before her mental eye of a proposal, and then of a neat little house shared with Terence, for she had contrived to discover that he had a little over a hundred a-year, besides what he made by his paintings;—and he was considered something of a rising genius—so she was quite ready to exchange her state of single blessedness and the hum-drum life at the old Parsonage for Terence and a brand-new suburban villa! But alas! for her hopes and dreams.

Maggie had been staying in London for a month or two with Mrs. Pattison, her father's sister, and on her return to Wingfield this handsome son of Erin basely deserted his first love, and showed unmistakably that her younger sister had won his affections. In less than six weeks he had wooed her, and obtained a shy "yes" from her rosy lips, and gained her father's rather reluctant consent to their engagement. Mr. Randal found it very hard, always had, to deny anything to his youngest and best-loved child, so had given his consent when she pleaded for it; but he would not hear of a marriage for a year or two, until Maggie was seventeen or eighteen, and he did not altogether like his son-in-law elect.

O'Hara was gentlemanly and handsome, singularly so, with wavy chestnut hair, a long curling beard and heavy moustache, and a pair of eyes, blue, as only true-bred Irish orbs ever are. They were black-lashed, well-placed eyes, yet in their azure depths was a look of lurking devilry and passion, that made one feel destiny would make him either a very good man, if she smiled on him, or a very bad one if she frowned.

For him there would be no middle course; it would be for weal or woe. In a dim sort of way Mr. Randal realised this, and half-fearfully trusting his daughter's future to such hands, but he had little or nothing to leave her or her sisters, and knew that it would be to her advantage to be married and have a legal protector.

Besides, there was no tangible fault to be found with the young fellow. He had some little property of his own, was rising in his profession, worked diligently, went to church regularly, which was, of course, a recommendation in the rector's eyes, and proved himself a most devoted and attentive lover. About his affection for his little fiancée there could be no doubt. He simply idolized her, was never happy out of her presence, and was a perfect slave to every wish and whim. His love for her overpowered every other feeling, his whole life seemed to draw light and colour from it, his passion made him weak and yielding in all that concerned Maggie, and when Mr. Randal made the proviso that the engagement should be kept secret, Terence agreed to it, though he did not like the stipulation, because he feared her father would not give his consent else.

The old gentleman had been prompted to this by Maud. He was too unworlly, too visionary to have thought of such a thing himself; but his second daughter, practical, worldly and ambitious, looking far ahead, knew that her sister's rare loveliness would probably win her a titled admirer, and she thought it would be a pity in that case to have her engagement to an artist of mediocre repute made public, because she reasoned a private engagement could be broken off much more easily than a public one, and of course, a rich marriage would be beneficial to the whole family, while an alliance with O'Hara would only provide a home for one.

Besides, she owed Terence a grudge for deserting her after his plainly-shown devotion. The young man little knew what a demon of hate and malice his conduct had raised in the breast of the woman he had slighted; a demon that nothing would lay save an ample revenge. She was wild with rage at being jilted and passed over, though she gave no outward sign of the inward fury that possessed her, but she exerted all her powers of persuasion, made her father do as she pleased; and none of the Wingfield gossips knew that beautiful Maggie Randal had promised to become Terence O'Hara's wife at some future time, a time to which he looked forward with passionate longing, and to which she did not look forward at all.

Almost a child in years and ideas, she gave no serious thought to the future. A lover seemed to her to be a very desirable thing to possess; a person who always smiled at and petted her, was ever ready as an escort, gave her heaps of trinkets and bon-bons, and gloves, and bouquets, who always sought to amuse and please her, and who deferred to her in a manner that was extremely pleasing to one so young and inexperienced.

Then it was delightful to wander in the woods with him, looking for the first flowers of spring, the modest violet, the fair snow drop, and starry primrose. It was a pleasant change from the society of her sisters, who, though they all spoiled her more or less, were sometimes to chide her gently for the useless life she led; and Laura would try to induce her to accompany her on her errands of charity, and carry beef-tea and bibles to her poor people, with their large and ever-increasing families; but Maggie would refuse, making a wry face and declaring that she could not possibly go into the cottages unless Laura first gave to each and ever villager a bar of yellow soap and a good strong scrubbing-brush, where-with the recipients might first clean themselves and their dwellings, and when rebuked for this levity she would declare, with a charming, innocent smile, "that she could not be good, though it seemed to come so natural to her sisters, to potter about, distributing tracts and tobacco to the gouty old men, and tea and flannel to the rheumatic old women, and that

it was no use bothering her, as she hadn't a "calling that way;" so after awhile, when Terence appeared upon the scene, they gave up "bothering her," and left her at liberty to wander in Wingfield woods with her lover, and listen to his impassioned wooing and his soft nothings.

CHAPTER II.

A LOVER'S PARTING.

"WHERE are you going, Mag?" asked Kate, as her youngest sister rose from the table after the grim sorrag had been discussed, and the overgrown lettuces demolished.

"Out to the woods," was the laconic reply. "Take care of yourself, don't go too far!" admonished the elder.

"Oh, I shall be all right!"

"Yes," chimed in Maud. "I suppose Terence will be there to mount guard and look after you?"

"I suppose he will," agreed the young fiancée coolly, adjusting her old straw hat with its dissipated-looking wreath of buttercups, before the quaint mirror.

"You are a lucky girl! I wish I had nothing to do but wander about in the sunshine idly the whole day through;" and Maud sighed enviously, as she plucked up a little scarlet flannel petticoat and began stitching away at it vigorously.

"I wish you had, my dear, also. The best thing you can do is to marry a rich husband; then you can idle as much as you like, and be clothed in purple and fine linen as well."

"I've been trying to do that for some years past, and haven't succeeded! Rich men are not like blackberries, plentiful, in and about Wingfield. If, however, any come within my ken you may be perfectly certain that I shall do my best to impress them with a due sense of my manifold charms."

"Sir Lionel Molyneux, for example."

"Well, yes! only I'm afraid I shouldn't stand much chance against you. Your superior attractions would win the day!" and she gazed with reluctant admiration at the fresh young face before her that looked so bewitching under the shade of the old garden hat.

"How inconsistent you are!" said Maggie, slowly, as though reflecting. "A short time ago you said his coming could make no difference to me, as my engagement debarred me from trying for the prize, and now you say I should win the day!"

"So I should think you would!" replied her sister, in no way abashed. "And surely you wouldn't be so foolish enough to let such a half-and-half sort of engagement as yours stand in the way of your being my lady, and mistress of such a splendid place as Molyneux Hall?"

"I don't know. I think I am too fond of Terence!" and then, as though wishing to end the discussion, Maggie took up a soiled, faded Fawcett parasol, which was quite out of keeping with her pretty blue cambric dress and long tan-coloured suede gloves (O'Hara's last present), and stepped into the garden, through the French window.

It was a bright, glorious day, the air clear, and full of fresh warmth; the tender green leaves and budding trees were kissed by the gentle breeze. The lilacs were blossoming, the blackthorns white with bloom, the laburnums wore their spring livery of green and gold, the beeches showed their dark, purple foliage; in a huge yew tree a thrush was singing loudly, and up in the oaks the blackbirds whistled, as if trying to express their delight in the beauty of the day, and their indifference to care and sorrow. The whole atmosphere was sweet with the odour of newly-turned hay, and the perfume of flowers and budding leaves; yet the young girl, as she strolled slowly on, never lifted her eyes to look around. She was thinking—thinking intently of what Maud had said. The seed had been sown, and it had not fallen in stony places, but was destined to take root, and blossom and bear fruit, whether for good or evil time alone would show. On she went

through the garden to the wicket gate, which opened on a rural lane, bright with blue-bells and the red flowers of the dead nettle, which ran between orchards, where the great apple-boughs were a mass of white and coral blossom, and where clumps of snowy wood-sorrel grew.

Half-way down the lane she stopped, and shading her eyes with her hand gazed straight ahead for a moment; then with an exclamation of delight she bounded forward, with the grace of a young fawn, to meet the man coming towards her.

"Day-dreaming, Maggie?" he asked gaily, as he caught her in his arms for a moment, and pressed a swift kiss on her soft cheek.

"Day-dreaming! Terry, what do you mean?" she inquired, lifting her exquisite eyes to his, with a bewildering glance.

"Well, your thoughts were far away, little one! Now, don't deny it. Your eyes were glazed to the ground, you walked in a listless, mechanical kind of way, and you only just caught sight of me as you stumbled over the gnarled roots of Sretton's oak, which obliged you to look up to see where you were steering to. What were you thinking or rather dreaming about?"

"I don't know!" she answered, slowly.

"Little fibber—come tell me!" he pleaded, flinging himself down on the bank, softly cushioned with green moss, studded with forget-me-nots and anemones, and drawing her to his side.

"How can I tell you when I don't know."

"But surely, you must know what your thoughts were?" he remonstrated.

"No, they were chaotic—a confused mass! Nothing clear or definite."

This was not strictly true, but Maggie hardly cared to tell him what her thoughts were.

"Then, I shall never be enlightened as to what gave you that uncommon air of sedateness and preoccupation?"

"No, I suppose not! Don't you ever think without thinking, Terry?"

"No, my dear!" replied the young man, with a gay laugh at her bull. "I can't say that I do. When I indulge in that luxury, my thoughts are definite enough, and are generally about a certain, small personage, who is not a hundred miles away now."

"Pooh!" she responded to this pretty speech, making a little moue of derision.

"Don't do that again, or the temptation will be too great. I shall kiss you!"

"I shall do it if I like!" defiantly.

"Of course! Only you know the penalty."

"There, then," repeating the grimace.

"And there, then," he echoed, stooping his head and kissing her mouth, despite the resistance offered by the projecting brim of the old hat.

"Don't, don't!" she cried, pettishly, pushing away his bearded lips with her soft fingers, and springing to her feet; "how you tease and worry me. You know it annoys me, here in public. Some one might see us!"

"I didn't mean to annoy you, dearest!" he said, humbly, with all the humility that so often goes hand-in-hand with true love, "and don't think it is likely that anyone will witness the performance in this lonely lane. There isn't a living creature to be seen, save the ring-doves and thrushes, and the other little dickies. Surely you don't mind them?"

"No, of course, I don't! still you ought to be more cautious. This lane leads to Molyneux Hall, and some people might be passing to our place and see you."

"Well, and if they did I don't see that it would matter so very much. We are engaged!"

"You forget our engagement is a private one!"

"No, I don't!" he answered, quickly; a frown disfiguring the bright beauty of his face, and calling up that expression to his eyes which altered his whole aspect so strangely; doing away with the habitual debonnaire look of good-humour, and leaving in its place one

almost malignant, and certainly repellent. "I wish I could forget it," he went on, "or change the state of affairs. It puts me at a disadvantage, and—"

"How cross you are to-day!" interrupted Maggie, poutingly. "I shall go home if you are not going to be in a better humour and amuse me!"

"I don't mean to be cross!" he answered, softening at once; "and I'll do anything you wish to amuse you."

"Will you really?" eagerly.

"Yes, really!"

"Take me on the river, then."

"I said I would never do that again, Maggie, since I heard it was Sir Lionel Molyneux's private property, and that we were only trespassers going on without permission. I don't care to put myself in the way of receiving more impudence from that hound of an agent of his."

"I know you did, but it is all rubbish about Green. I don't care a fig for him. We have kept a boat on their river for over twenty years. The late Sir Marmaduke gave papa permission to do so, and until the present baronet revokes that permission I intend to go on and enjoy myself as much as I can, despite that old curmudgeon, who is a mere dog in office, and who will soon find himself nobody, as the real master is coming home. Now do take me, Terry, like a dear, good boy. I long to be lying amid the cushions, floating down with the stream!" and she clasped her hands round his arm, and looked up at him beseechingly.

The young man hesitated for a moment, looking down at the brilliant, beautiful face, with its violet eyes, and frame of corn-coloured hair that he loved with such passionate devotion. Then he said, slowly and reluctantly,—

"Well, then, Mag, if you wish it so much I will take you."

"You old darling!" she cried, joyfully, giving his arm a squeeze. "Let us make haste. It will be glorious on the river to-day," and, picking up the shabby old parasol, she tripped along by his side, chattering gaily, in perfect good humour at having gained the day, and got her own way.

"How is it," he asked, as he walked along beside her, "that you always get me to do just as you like?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she answered, carelessly, "unless it is because you love me, and that it pleases you to please me."

"That is a very good reason; but it might apply to you as well as to me. You say you love me, yet you seldom or never give up any whim or fancy to please me."

"Oh! that's a very different thing!" she rejoined, quickly, though with a somewhat heightened colour in her fair cheeks; "girls always have their own way, and ought to be spoiled."

"Ought they? Then you have your deserts, and are grandly spoiled."

"Do you think so?"

"I do," he answered, with mock gravity. "You have some strange power over me, which obliges me to spoil you."

"Oh! my lovely foe, Tell me where thy strength does lie— Where the power that charms me so; In thy soul, or in thy eye?"

he quoted.

"Don't be a goose," she said, smilingly, as they reached the riverside, and he helped her into the boat.

"Am I a goose?" he questioned, as he dipped the oars in the rippling water, and propelled the little craft along.

"You are sometimes."

"I don't think you ought to reproach me with that."

"Why not?"

"Because you are the fairy whose magic wand transforms me into that most ridiculous of feathered bipeds; and, as I told you before, I don't know how you do it."

And he didn't quite. Yet the solution of the mystery was easy enough. His love for her

was strong, passionate, soul-absorbing. Hers for him was weak, changeable; now tender, now indifferent, and it gave her an advantage over him, which she was not backward in using. He loved her better than anything in the whole world; she loved him moderately. He could deny her nothing, she found no difficulty in denying him anything. So in the game of love, at which they were playing, it was likely he would get worsted.

In a dim way his instinct told him that his affection was the strongest and best, and warned him not to give too much, and be content to receive so little, but he hardly heeded the warning. The charm of her beauty was greater than his powers of resistance. He gave himself up to the delight of basking in the sunshine of her presence, content to pour out the treasure of his heart's best affection at her feet, and gave no thought to the future, living in the joy of the present, resolutely blind to what he did not wish to see, and giving no heed to the warning.

Such love is wonderful in its utter abnegation of self, and rarely seen in this prosaic world; at the same time though, it is dangerous, for if thwarted, checked, or abused it may turn to hate—its very intensity rendering no middle course possible—and in its mad desire for vengeance may sacrifice the once loved object to the gratification of that unholty passion.

Maggie did not know that she was playing with fire, handling edged tools. She had never troubled herself to gauge the depth or intensity of her passionate Irish lover's nature—feeling, perhaps, that it was a feat quite beyond her moderate powers, and knew very little of his temperament.

"Shall we stay here for a little?" asked Terence, as he ran the nose of the skiff on to the bank, under the shade of a drooping willow.

"Yes, if you like," answered his fair companion, indifferently.

"I do like. And now, Maggie, make room for me. I am coming to sit at your feet," and he threw himself full length in the bottom of the boat, leaning his head against her knee. "Do you love me?" he asked, after a silence of some minutes—a silence broken only by the rustling of the sedge, and the glad voice of the stream, as it went singing over the golden beds of sand.

"Why do you ask me—and why this great affection?" she queried, jestingly, as he took her hand in his and pressed it tenderly.

"I ask you because I like to hear you say, 'Terence, I love you,' and—because—there is another reason."

"What is the other reason?"

"Give me what I plead for first," he whispered.

"Terence, I love you," she answered, hastily, as though eager to hear what he had to say. "Now tell me your news!"

"Well, the reason is—that I am going away."

"Going away!" she echoed, in surprise. "When?"

"Early to-morrow morning."

"And may a body ask where you are going to?" she demanded, recovering almost at once her usual insouciance.

"Of course, dearest. I am going to explain to you the cause of this sudden flight. You remember my telling you about Mr. Belton?"

"Yes."

"Well, at last he has returned from abroad, has bought a palatial mansion in Yorkshire, and has written an imperative command for me to go and paint the frescos on his drawing-room walls."

"And you intend to obey it, and leave me?" said Maggie, somewhat reproachfully.

"My love, I feel that I ought," replied O'Hara, in an expostulatory way. "He has been such a good friend and patron I could not well refuse; and then he is very rich, and I shall benefit by the transaction in a monetary way. I am anxious now to make all I can, to be enabled to prepare a fitting nest for my

bird when she comes to it. Don't be vexed, my dearest," he went on, gently, raising himself on his elbow to look into the beautiful face, that looked the least little bit in the world sulky. "I would not go if I could help it. I shall be wretched the whole time we are apart. I am only happy, now, in your society."

"How long will you be away?" she asked, more graciously.

"Not less than one month, and not more than six."

"Six!" she ejaculated. "That is a very long time."

"It will appear ages to me. But I shall work hard—very hard, and try to get done long before that."

"I hope you will."

"Thanks, dearest. I shall try my best. And absence, Maggie, you know, 'makes the heart grow fonder.' So you will love me better when I return, won't you?"

"I don't know, that is, yes—I suppose so," she answered, confusedly, avoiding the glance of his eye.

"We had better be going towards home," she added a moment later; "it is getting cold," and she shivered from head to foot as though stricken with ague.

"Are you cold?" he asked, with tender concern. "Put this on," and he threw his tweed coat round her shoulder; and, seizing the oars pulled away manfully, making the little skiff travel swiftly through the sun-kissed waters. "Are you warmer now?" he asked, after they had left the river, and were walking rapidly across the meadows to the lane leading to the Randalls' house.

"Yes, thanks. It was only a momentary chilliness."

"I am glad of that; I should not like to go away leaving you on the brink of an illness."

"There is no fear of that, I am never ill," and she laughed at the mere idea, strong in her youth and superb constitution.

"You had better not come any further," she continued, stopping under the spreading branches of a great tree. "It would be no use your coming in to-night; father is at Mr. Travers's, and Laura has a mother's meeting or some rubbishy affair of that sort, so she and the girls will be occupied. I will say good-bye to them for you."

"Very well, dear," he agreed, submissively, a look of disappointment on his face, "just as you like. But if we are to part here you must say farewell properly, and kiss me good-bye. Will you?" and he looked pleadingly at the beautiful, down-drooped, blonde head he loved so well with such passionate, such absorbing intensity.

"Yes!" she answered, without raising her eyes, and in a minute his arms were about her, and he was raining down kisses on cheek and brow.

"You won't forget me, Maggie?" he whispered, gazing at her with the look of a hungry man.

"No, Terence, I won't forget you."

Her voice sounded cold and measured beside his, tremulous with strong emotion.

"And you will always love me as you do now?"

"Yes."

"And be true to me? What shall I do without you during all these long dreary days that must pass ere we meet again? My love, my life, mine alone!" and he strained her to him with tender force, and drew the gold-tressed head down to rest on his breast, while the leaves of the old oak fluttered in the evening breeze, and the grasses awayed to and fro.

The quick-winged moments sped on, and lengthened into an hour. Ah! when the moments are golden bright why will not Old Time stand still, and let poor mortals enjoy them? He never does, but rushes onward with heedless speed, parting those that love sometimes for ever and aye.

"Terence, I must go," she murmured at last, trying to escape from his encircling arms. "It is so late; Kate will be angry."

"My darling, I know I am selfish to keep

you, yet it is so hard to part. You will write to me often, little wife?"

"Yes, as often as I can. You know I am a bad correspondent."

"You will try and be a good one, for my sake. Your letters will be all I shall have to live on."

Getting no reply he kissed her again, while a great white-faced owl in the hollow of the tree blinked and winked at them with solemn stupidity.

"Good-bye," he whispered.

"Good-bye," she answered; then flinging his arms about her in a last passionate embrace he tore himself away and strode down the lane.

Once he turned and looked back, and to the last day of his life he remembered Maggie Randall as he saw her then, standing in the glow of the sunset, that flushed the western sky with ruddy flame and lit up, as with a halo, the beautiful head and face of the girl he worshipped with all the ardour of his fiery nature.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPELL OF VIOLET EYES.

THREE days later, as the rector's daughters were discussing their early tea, they heard the clatter of hoofs in the road, and looking out they saw a lady and gentleman rein up at their gate, followed by a smart groom in top and tights.

"It is the Molyneux!" cried Maud, somewhat dismayed, casting a quick glance round at the shabby room, "and this place not tidy. What are we to do? Anne is cleaning the drawing-room, and is very much *en deshabille*. How unfortunate!"

"It does not matter," said Kate, calmly. "I will go and meet them, and they must come in here. Eunice and I used to be intimate friends, and she evidently intends that the intimacy shall continue, as she comes to see us so soon after her return;" and rising from her place at the head of the table Miss Randall proceeded to the hall-door, which stood wide open to let in the flower-scented air, and was just in time to be embraced under the vine-clad porch by the friend of her childhood.

"Dear Kate," cried Miss Molyneux, "what an age it is since we met. I am so glad to see you."

"And I to see you, believe me."

"And me, too, I hope," said Sir Lionel, who was standing behind his sister. "Don't leave me out in the cold, please!"

"I am not going to," replied the rector's daughter, smiling, "though I might have done so if you had come here alone. You have altered so much, I should not have known you."

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered, as they went towards the parlour. "I was in the hobbledohy stage when I went away; but I suppose now I may claim to be considered a man."

"I think so."

"Time doesn't stand still with us," he remarked, after he and Eunice had greeted the others. "Why, Miss Maggie was quite a baby when we left Molyneux, and Miss Maud wore short frocks and had a weakness for bread-and-jam. Now you are both fashionable young ladies."

"Hardly that," remonstrated Maud, with a laugh; "we haven't much chance of becoming fashionable here."

"Why? Is it so dull?"

"Yes, rather. The chief amusements consist of the school-treat twice a-year, a concert at Christmas supported by local talent, two or three carpet dances in spring, at which the ladies preponderate, mufin struggles every now and then during winter, papa's bible-classes, Laura's mothers' meetings, and—"

"Oh! stop, stop," cried Eunice, covering her ears with her hands. "We must change all that. Muffin's we, Li?"

"Well, some of it, my dear," responded the Baronet. "For instance, the muffin strug-

des and the local concert might I think, be easily dispensed with."

"So do I. I intend to wake up this sleepy hollow, and you girls must help me. We've brought some gentlemen down from London, and have started tennis already on the lower lawn. I want you all to come over to-morrow afternoon, and we will get up a match. Will you?"

They all said "yes" except Laura, who was obliged to refuse, owing to a previous engagement to go to a sewing bee in the village.

"Has Laura renounced the world and the flesh, &c?" asked Miss Molyneux, with a merry twinkle in her fine brown eyes.

"Yes," replied Maud, smiling again to display her white, even teeth, "she is going to dispossess the church, and has bade adieu to all pomps and vanities."

"What! Is she going into a convent!"

"Oh! no. She is only going to marry Mr. Travers's cousin, a very pious young man, which is nearly as bad, I think."

"Is that all?" said their visitor, laughing at her mistake. "Laura, my dear, I congratulate you."

"Thanks," murmured the ugly duckling of the family, blushing to the roots of her sandy hair, and looking plainer than ever.

"Well, at any rate," observed Sir Lionel, "you are fashionable in one way," and he cast rather a longing glance at the tea equipage.

"What is that?"

"You indulge in five o'clock tea."

"It is hardly an indulgence," announced straightforward Kate. "We dine early, and it is quite a meal to us."

"Very sensible. We dine at eight, and I tell my mother it is nothing more than supper."

"May I give you some?" asked Maud, deftly handling a quaint little Salopian cup with her slim fingers.

"Thanks. I have a weakness that way."

But when he received the cup from the fair dispenser he did not sit down at her side as she expected he would, but went over to the window where Maggie was sitting, and began chatting to her.

"Have you renounced the world like your sister?" he inquired.

"Oh, no," she replied, with a shy, upward glance from her lovely eyes.

"By Jove, what a pretty girl!" thought the baronet, continuing aloud. "Then we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, to tennis?"

"Thanks, yes. I shall be glad to come, but I don't know how to play."

"In that case I shall have the pleasure of teaching you. You will be on my side, remember."

"Thanks," she murmured again. "I am afraid you will lose."

"I daresay I shall," muttered the Baronet, in an aside, "as I shall be studying you and not the game." Aloud, however, he only uttered a few polite nothings.

"What a beautiful animal!" exclaimed Maggie, as a huge Swiss dog with a rough, tawny coat, and a great black muzzle, pushed open the gate and shuffled up the path to the house. "I wonder who he belongs to?"

"He! That is Rufus. He is mine. I bought him from the monks as we were coming home through Switzerland. He is only four months old, so I take it he will be gigantic when he is full grown. Here, Rufus, come here, sir."

The dog, hearing his master's voice, lumbered up and sprang through the window, alighting at his feet.

"Who gave you permission to come in, sir? you rascal!" and Sir Lionel lifted his whip.

"Don't beat him," pleaded Maggie, putting a white, dimpled arm round his shaggy neck.

"I love dogs, and we haven't one, so it is quite a treat to have one to fondle."

"And be so fondled," thought his master.

"Well, I won't give him the thrashing he deserves this time. He is very disobedient."

If I can't break him to heel I shall give him away."

"I wish I might have him," sighed the girl, enviously, stroking the shiny black muzzle that was being thrust into her pink palm.

"I will give him to you," said the young man, rather eagerly, "if Mr. Randal will allow you to have him."

"I'm afraid he wouldn't. Rufus is too big. We shouldn't know where to put him."

"Is that the only objection?"

"Yes, I think so."

"In that case, then, I can give you a dog that your father can't object to. He is a very pretty little fellow. Quite a lady's pet."

"Kate, do you think I might have him?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, I am sure papa won't mind."

"Then if I am not robbing you, I should so much like to have him."

"Not at all. I have a dozen, so can easily spare one. I will send him down to you to-morrow," he added, as they took their leave.

And he was as good as his word. The next day the smart groom brought down the tiny lion dog in a dainty basket, with a fluffy, blue mat, and a big, blue bow round his neck, with Sir Lionel's compliments.

"That is a good beginning," said Maud, with a gleam in her cold eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked her sister.

"I mean what I say, that it is a good beginning; that it looks as though the lord of all you broad acres meant business, and as though you stand a good chance of someday being mistress of Molyneux Hall."

"What rubbish you talk!" said Maggie, pettishly, taking the little animal in her arms, and going up to her room.

Yet, though she was vexed at Maud making such a remark, all the time she was dressing, and while they were walking across the meadow lands, that lay between the parsonage and the great house, the words, "Mistress of Molyneux Hall" rang in her ears like a refrain.

They were warmly welcomed on their arrival by Lady Molyneux, an elegant, aristocratic woman, with white hair and a careworn face, and a look of ever intent watchfulness in her dark eyes, probably the result of her never-ceasing anxiety with regard to her only son's mental welfare, and were at once carried off to the lawn by Eunice, where three or four gentlemen were lounging in easy chairs and smoking with their host.

He rose with marked alacrity at the advent of the rector's daughters, and greeted them warmly, introducing his friends.

Captain Clifton, a dashing hussar, immediately attached himself to Maud, who was looking very charming in a pale, blue gown, much lace-trimmed and furbelowed. Kate's partner was a fox-hunting squire from Northumberland; Eunice paired off with the Comte de Villefille, a handsome Frenchman, and Maggie, as prearranged, played with Sir Lionel.

There was a great deal of merriment over the awkward play of the Misses Randal, but after a time the two eldest improved. Maggie, however, proved a hopeless case, probably because she was too lazy to throw herself genuinely into the spirit of the game.

"Shall we rest a little and watch the others," suggested the Baronet, after a time.

"We can sit in the swing if you like, and you can then study the game at your ease and leisure."

"Yes, that will be delightful," agreed his fair companion, and together they went over to the swing hung between two sturdy oaks, and he piled up the soft cushions for her to lean against, and sat beside her and they swung gently to and fro, and he looked long and often at the beautiful face shadowed by the great white hat, and thought he had never seen anything so lovely or fresh.

"You don't care for tennis much, Miss Randal?" he observed.

"What makes you think so?" she inquired, smilingly.

"Well, you play in a languid fashion, as though the game wasn't worth the candle."

"Do I?"

"Yes. Now confess you think it a stupid game."

"It would be high treason to say so to you, who advocate it so warmly."

"Not at all. Different things amuse different people, and at all times we should speak the truth."

"Do you think so? Do you think nothing justifies a fib or a white lie?"

"Nothing," he answered, gravely, almost sternly. "We should neither speak nor act them."

As he spoke Maggie glanced down at her ungloved, ringless hands, and winced a little. Maud had suggested the propriety of her taking off the shabby little gold ring, with Mizpah on it, that she always wore on the third finger of her left hand, the pledge of her engagement to O'Hara, and she had done so, slipping it into her pocket ere they reached the Hall, and now she felt she was acting a lie; concealing the only outward and visible sign of her betrothal. She, however, said, brightly enough, "In that case I must acknowledge that I do not consider it an intellectual pastime, and that I care for it not at all."

"I am sorry for that," replied her host, regretfully. "I hoped you and your sisters would have spent many pleasant afternoons here."

"And I hope we shall, too," she rejoined, with that shy, graceful air which was one of her chief charms in Sir Lionel's eyes. "My sisters evidently enjoy it," and she glanced at Kate and Maud, who, racket in hand, flushed and excited, were chasing balls about with amazing agility. "It would be a pity to debar them the pleasure of playing on my account." "Certainly, of course," he agreed, with unnecessary eagerness, "they must come whenever and as often as they wish. We must find some other amusement for you. What do you like best?"

"Going on the river. I think there is nothing so delightful as to lie in a boat on a heap of cushions and float down with the stream on a sunny day."

"I agree with you there. Only I like rowing instead of the *dolce far niente* when I am in a boat. I shall be able to gratify your love of the river, for I have ordered a skiff and expect it here shortly. I hope when it arrives that you will let me have the pleasure of rowing in it often."

"I shall be delighted to do so," she answered joyously.

And then they went on chatting about boating until the sound of the gong rang out on the balmy air summoning them in to dinner, and no thought of the impropriety of an engaged woman going about with another man crossed the mind of this gay, careless butterfly.

What did fill her mind, though, was a sort of awe at the grandeur and magnificence of the palatial mansion of the man who was so evidently struck by her brilliant beauty.

Molyneux Hall was a grand old place of the Elizabethan era, with thick clustering, twisted chimney-stacks, peaked gables, oriel windows, and mossy, ivy-grown terraces. A flight of steps led down to the principal avenue or drive, flanked with great limes, and away in the distance was a sweep of park and woodland, where the deer herded and the river wound like a silver ribbon amid its emerald setting.

The entrance-hall was forty feet high, with a dome-like roof and panelled walls, full of grim men in armour, shields of death-dealing weapons, and trophies of the chase. The drawing-room was a magnificent apartment, all pale green satin embroidered with gold, filled with rare china and art treasures.

Maggie had seen it often while the family were away, but then the costly curtains had been down, and the embroidered chairs and lounges covered with holland jackets, and the china and nick-nacks safe in dark closets

she nearly gasped when she saw it in all its uncovered splendour. The light of the rose-coloured candles reflected a hundred times in the many mirrors that hung about.

"This is an unceremonious dinner. We are not going to don swallowtails to-night," said her host, as he led her to the dining-room, and placed her at his right hand. "I trust you don't mind."

"Not at all," she murmured, almost overcome by his condescension, blushing like a carnation. "I don't like ceremony."

"Between ourselves, neither do I," he said, confidentially lowering his voice. "Sometimes I wish I had been born the son of a blacksmith. I could have thrown *les covenances* to the four winds then."

"Yes, but you would not have been master of this beautiful place."

"True," he assented, his eyes following hers round the room, which was more like a boudoir than a dining-room.

It was all ebony and gold, with quaint mirrors in carved frames, and old brass sconces against the walls, which held tinted candles, with rosy shades, which lit up the rare landscapes and sea pieces, and threw a tender glow on the faces at the table.

"Every position in life has its cares and troubles. No one can escape them. They are, I suppose, part of our lot here below, and make us not too reluctant to depart to another sphere when the summons comes."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Maggie, rather vaguely, feeling that she was getting out of her depths altogether. "I haven't thanked you for the little dog," she said, to change the subject. "It was most kind of you to give it me. I shall prize it greatly."

"Don't thank me, please. I ought to thank you for accepting him. I hope Jackie will be some amusement for you. He is very clever. I have taught him several tricks."

"I am sure he will be. What have you taught him?"

"Well, he begs with a pipe in his mouth, and will fetch your slippers, and walks on his hind legs all round the room, and— But, perhaps," he added, suddenly, "I had better come down to the Parsonage and make him perform for you. When may I come?"

"Whenever you like."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. I shall take advantage of your permission."

And he did. Day after day, on some pretext or other, Lionel Molyneux found his way down to the old Parsonage, drawn thither by the irresistible spell of a pair of lovely violet eyes and the golden sheen of sunny tresses.

Kate wondered a little, when she had time to wonder, what brought him to their shabby and dilapidated abode so often. Laura, occupied with mothers' meetings, school treats, bibles and beef-tea, tracts and tobacco, and Walter Lander's pious conversation, never gave it a thought; but Maud, clever, keen, worldly Maud, saw through it, saw and knew that the baronet's heart had left his keeping, and that her beautiful sister had won another adorer. And she would smile a little maliciously to herself when the two young people sat together, talking of dogs or boating, or dancing, or some other congenial subject, and think she would, after all, have revenge upon Terence for his desertion of her. One word might have warned Maggie, and have shown her the error of her ways, for

"Sorrow is wrought
By want of thought,
As well as by want of heart."

and she was only a giddy, careless child, giving no heed to anything save the moment's pleasure, but Maud would not have said that word to save her life. On the contrary, she encouraged the girl to associate with Sir Lionel, did all in her power to throw them together, and would sincerely advise her, whenever she saw the shabby little ring back on her finger, "Not to be a goose, and divorce her bonds to their grand friends, as

it wasn't much to boast of, being engaged to a struggling artist, unknown to fame."

"Constant dropping wears away a stone," says the old saw; and constant, alighting allusions to her absent lover made Maggie rather ashamed of the engagement of which she had once been so proud, and finally the gold circlet was strung on a ribbon and placed round her neck, out of sight and safe from prying eyes; and thus, while Terence was in far-off Yorkshire, the heart of the girl he adored was slipping away from him, going out to another by slow, but sure degrees, and he knew nothing of it, but waited and watched, and longed for the brief, ill-spelt scrawls that came to him much less often than he could have wished.

(To be continued.)

SIR RUPERT'S WILL.

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CHAPTER VI.

AND so the summer days went by, golden with sunshine, and sweet with the breath of June roses; and July came in, promising to be, so far as weather was concerned, the most perfect month of the whole year.

And weather has a great deal to do with the enjoyment of a holiday on the Thames, as all the world is well aware. It is probable that if the skies had been leaden, and the earth soaked, Mr. Denver and his daughter would have hastened back to their cosy, little house in Regent's Park, and Mildred's chances of meeting Captain Ingram would have been very considerably lessened. As it was she saw him every day, sometimes for eight or ten hours a day, for he made a third at all their excursions; and when he brought the two girls home at night Mr. Denver would meet him at the rose-wreathed porch, and ask him to come in and have dinner if he would consent to take "pot luck," which the soldier was only too delighted to risk.

He and Maud flirted in a perfectly open and liberal-spirited manner, each being quite aware of how much, or how little, the other meant; but the girl was wise in her generation, and never let Mildred suspect the part she was playing, or her perfect understanding that Captain Ingram's attentions to herself were only assumed as a cloak to hide the deeper feeling he entertained towards her friend.

Mr. Denver was quiescent. He had an idea that young people were intended to play the active part in the world's drama, and old ones fulfilled their destiny much better by remaining passive. Besides, his faith in his daughter's ability was unbounded, and he found submission to her wishes meant the peace of mind for which he longed. Thus, all things considered, it was better to let her go her own way unmolested.

"How is it you never go up to London?" inquired Captain Ingram one day, when he and two girls were sauntering slowly across the meadows towards the river. "I thought ladies could not exist for any length of time without a day's shopping."

"Then you showed your entire ignorance of the matter," responded Maud, flippantly; "besides, we don't exist down here, we vegetate."

"I shouldn't mind if the rest of my life were spent in such vegetation," he said, with a significant glance; "at all events, it is idyllic enough for Tennyson himself."

"But, nevertheless, slightly monotonous. After all, the river is only the river, and I really think by this time I know every shallow, every creek, every breakwater between Richmond and Chertsey! Your idea of a day in town is not a bad one. What do you say, Mildred?"

Before she could speak the officer interposed.

"You haven't seen the Academy yet, and I hear it is really worth a visit. Will you let me take you there to-morrow afternoon, and in the evening to the opera?"

"Not the opera," said Mildred, hastily, and with a glance at her black dress.

"I beg your pardon. I ought to have remembered you were in mourning," he said, apologetically; but though he had known she was in mourning he was still ignorant of who the crape was worn for. Once, when he had asked Maud, she had replied "a near and dear friend," and had contrived to evade giving any other answer, but in such a perfectly easy and natural manner that he never imagined there was any ulterior motives for her reticence.

"But if we can't go to the opera we may manage the Academy," Maud said. "I went there two or three times in May, and saw some wonderful bonnets. Perhaps this time I may be able to catch a passing glimpse of the pictures."

Thus it was arranged, and the next morning they all three started, and arrived at Burlington House somewhere about twelve o'clock. This was Mildred's first introduction to the Academy, and for a time she forgot everything else but her delight in the pictures. Maud behaved much more philosophically, put up her eyeglasses, looked critical, and made would-be-learned remarks about "middle distances, foregrounds, etc.," to which Roland listened with quiet amusement.

"What a horribly tiring place this is!" she exclaimed, making a rush at a divan, and triumphantly securing two seats—an opportunity she had patiently waited for over ten minutes. "I have got the crick in my neck, and my pet corn is only just recovering from the fourteen stone deposited on it by that female Daniel Lambert over there. I wish," plaintively, "I had brought my bonbonniere, for some chocolates would be a perfect godsend at the present minute."

"They are easily procurable in the refreshment department. I'll go and get you some," he said. "Will you stay here until I return?"

"I have no intention of moving for the next half-hour, because I see at least a dozen people with their eyes on this seat," declared Maud, spitefully, whereat Ingram laughed as he threaded his way through the crowded room to one yet more densely packed.

The constantly changing stream of people amused Mildred, accustomed as she had been to the quietude of Ingram Chase, and before that to the monotony of school life. Even such a glimpse of the great London world as this had in it an element of excitement as well as novelty, and she scanned the different faces that passed before her with the eager curiosity of a child.

"And to think that amongst all these human beings there is not one I know!" she exclaimed to Maud.

"But that is not the case. At least there is some who knows you, and who is making her way over here. Do you see her?—a fair woman, rather pretty, with sandy hair."

Mildred followed the direction of her companion's eyes, and there was Miss Pedley, looking very unlike the demure nurse in her fashionable pale green saten dress, with its lace fichu, and coquettishly arranged bundle of roses.

"Oh, Maud, what is to be done?" exclaimed Mildred, in a panic. "Suppose Captain Ingram should return while she is talking to me, and should hear her address me as 'Lady Ingram'?"

Even Miss Denver, with all her calm assurance, was rather taken aback at the suggestion of such a possibility; but before she had time to say anything Miss Pedley was shaking hands with the young widow, and expressing her delight at the encounter.

"Such an unexpected meeting, too," she said, with an accent that made Mildred feel she had committed a breach of good taste in coming to a public place. "Are you staying in London, Lady Ingram?"

"No, I am visiting some friends near Salisbury."

"On the river? How delightful! I have been longing for some boating ever since last summer."

"It is very delightful, indeed!" returned Mildred, absently, her face flushing a deep red, for in the distance she descried Rowland Ingram, who, by reason of his superior height, towered half a head above most of the men present.

Neither her confusion or its cause escaped the keen glances of Louisa Pedley.

"Why, there is your husband's cousin!" she exclaimed. "Did he come here with you?"

Maud looked at her as if she would have said "What's that to do with you!" but Mildred faltered a low affirmative. Unfortunately at this moment a lady sitting next her vacated her seat, which Miss Pedley instantly took possession of.

"I used to know Captain Ingram years ago," she remarked. "He was a very old friend of my father's, and as it happens I rather wanted to see him in order to make some inquiries concerning a mutual acquaintance who was in the same regiment in India."

So there was no chance of averting the meeting. Mildred and Maud exchanged significant glances; then the former said, hurriedly,—

"May I ask a favour of you, Miss Pedley? You will doubtless think it a strange one, but some time I shall be able to explain it. I want you not to mention my name before Captain Ingram, or to give any sign of knowing who I am. Do you mind?"

"Certainly not. I am only too pleased to do anything to oblige you," returned the quondam nurse; but she flashed a glance of rapid inquiry at the speaker, as if she would fain know the motive for the request. Captain Ingram, to say the truth, neither looked or felt particularly pleased to meet this daughter of his "old friend," who he was surprised to find in conversation with the two girls on his return.

"It seems to be our lot to come across each other in an unforeseen manner," she exclaimed, gaily, as she gave him her daintily gloved hand. "Is it fate, do you think?"

He had not thought anything at all about it; but this he could hardly tell her, and she rattled on as fluently and blithely as Maud herself could have done, somewhat to the indignation of that young damsel, who was not inclined to tolerate a rival in her own especial domain.

"Give me your address," she said to Mildred, when at length she rose to take leave. "I should like to call and see you next week if I should happen to be anywhere near."

Lady Ingram complied, and breathed a sigh of relief when the green sateen and red roses vanished in the crowd. She had not quite got over her old antipathy for Miss Pedley even yet, although she had more than once called herself to account pretty severely for her injustice—forgetting that instinct is almost invariably stronger than reason.

After leaving Burlington House the trio went into the park, and sat for an hour under the trees, watching the gay stream of fashion as it was borne along, and afterwards adjourned to a restaurant in Regent-street, where they met Mr. Denver, and all had dinner together. Then came the drive to Waterloo Station, and journey by train home.

"Captain Ingram," said Maud, as she was walking by his side, while her father and Mildred followed behind, "is Miss Pedley a friend of yours?"

He looked slightly embarrassed.

"A friend! No—not exactly that. I saw a good deal of her once, many years ago."

"And you were intimate with her?"

"Yes—in a measure."

"Ah!"

There is a good deal capable of being expressed even in a monosyllable, and that one of Maud's spoke volumes.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS PEDLEY kept her word, and two days after the meeting at the Academy made her appearance at the cottage, just as Maud was presiding at a dainty little china equiptage, from which she was dispensing five o'clock tea. Mr. Denver happened to be at home at the time, and to him the uninvited guest made herself so agreeable that he begged her to stay to dinner.

"But I should be so late getting home," she objected, hesitating.

"You might remain all night for that matter; we have a spare bedroom, which is very much at your service."

Miss Pedley glanced at Maud, who could do no less than second the invitation, and upon that a telegram was despatched to the aunt with whom the ex-nurse was staying, telling her not to expect her niece till the next day.

"So kind of you!" murmured Miss Pedley, as she took off her bonnet in Maud's room, and gave a few touches to the tangled locks on her forehead. "At my aunt's I never see any society whatever, and sometimes I feel as if the ennui and monotony would kill me before long!"

"Have you quite given up your profession, then?" inquired Mildred, who was idly playing with the roses that intrusively thrust their heads through the open casement.

"Yes, for a time; the confinement and want of sleep did not suit me, and this aunt who is now living at Baywater came over from America just before I left Ingram Chase, and asked me to go and reside with her permanently. Such is my history!"

When they got downstairs they found Captain Ingram there, and he was immediately taken possession of by Miss Pedley, who kept him by her side talking of "old times," and recalling various episodes to the officer's memory, which, to judge from appearances, he would rather have forgotten.

After dinner a walk was proposed, and they all went out into the road, which, at this time of the evening, was almost deserted. By some chance Mildred and Roland were together in front, she with a white fleecy shawl wrapped hood-wise over her head; from out of the folds her face, with its dainty bloom, looked fairer than ever.

"I imagined, from what I heard and saw at the Chase, that there was no probability of Lady Ingram getting friendly with her husband's cousin," said Miss Pedley, softly, her eyes fixed with a curious intenceness on the couple in front, as she and Maud sauntered slowly after them. "At that time he seemed to have taken an actual dislike to her."

Maud said nothing, and she continued,—

"By-the-by, I heard him addressing her as 'Miss Mildred'—is it possible he does not know who she is?"

A point-blank question like this there was no possibility of evading.

"That is the case," Maud admitted, reluctantly, "but her meeting with him here was quite accidental, and it was at my request she consented to keep her identity a secret. You see, he had imbibed an unreasonable prejudice against his cousin's widow, and we thought the only way to remove it was to let him become personally acquainted with her, after which we imagined an amicable arrangement regarding the property might be arrived at."

"How very romantic—why, it is quite a complicated plot! And when do you intend undeceiving him?"

"I don't know—soon I expect, but that, I suppose, we must let the progress of events determine. Would you like to go on the river? I'll pull you up with pleasure."

Miss Pedley acquiesced rather reluctantly, fancying this suggestion was merely a ruse for leaving Mildred and Ingram alone—as in effect it was. She had never taken her eyes off the unconscious couple, and the soldier's lover-like attitude, his attentive fulfilment of Mildred's every wish, and the gaze of passionate admiration with which he regarded her, were quite

sufficient to enlighten the watcher as to how the case really stood. Her two hands clenched themselves together until the nails absolutely cut into the flesh, but there was no change in the expression of her face, not even an increase of colour on her cheeks.

Mildred, seeing the two girls push off in the boat, proposed joining them, but to this her companion objected.

"I never see you alone; it seems to me that you purposely avoid a *l'le-à-lle*," he said. "Besides, I have something to say to you that could not be said before a third person."

She looked at him wonderingly with her lovely lustrous eyes, but noidea of his meaning flashed across her even yet. She was young for her age, in spite of the experiences she had passed through; and, more than this, the notion that Ingram was attracted by Maud had taken complete possession of her.

They were standing on a piece of green sward, to which the moonlight lent its peculiar sheeny tint, while below the placid river flowed on, each ripple gleaming like silver, and the broad lily leaves making dark patches of shadow upon its surface. The air was soft and balmy, and full of subtle floating perfumes, and over all reigned a deep summer silence, broken only by the washing of the waves against the banks, and the distant sound of Maud's musical voice singing "In the Gloaming," as she plied her oars.

"Is not the night lovely?" Mildred said, after a slight pause. "One feels inclined to quote poetry as the only means of expressing a due tribute of appreciation."

"Or to follow Moore's example, and invoke the spirit of the scene," he added. "Don't you remember that bit in *Lalla Rookh*—

"We call thee hither, entrancing power,
Spirit of love, spirit of bliss,
Thy holiest time is the moonlight hour,
And there never was moonlight so sweet as this!"

"There never was moonlight so sweet as this—at least, to me," Captain Ingram repeated.

"But surely you were accustomed to beautiful nights in the tropics."

"Yes—only then you were not there."

"I!"

She turned upon him a glance of half-startled inquiry, little thinking how lovely she looked with the white shawl falling back from her pretty tumbled hair, and her scarlet lips slightly parted in surprise.

He laid his hand gently on her bare arm, and every pulse in her body thrilled at the touch.

"Haven't you guessed my secret, Mildred? Don't you know that I love you, and the dearest wish of my heart is to make you my wife?"

"Your wife!"

She spoke the words in a whisper, but they were a revelation that she herself had never before suspected. Hitherto she had not stayed to think how it was time spent with him passed so quickly, why her heart beat at the sound of his footstep, or why the sunshine seemed less bright when he was away. Now it came upon her like a flash of light, and she knew that for weal or for woe, for time and for eternity, she loved him!

Other considerations came afterwards, but in that supreme moment they had no weight, and she did not attempt resistance when Captain Ingram caught her in his arms and showered his kisses on her lips.

"My love—my darling!" he said, his voice low and passionate. "You will marry me, Mildred?"

Then remembrance came, and she drew herself forcibly away, her face growing as white as a lily, and a shiver running through her whole frame. What would he say when he knew the truth, and learned that the girl he loved was identical with the one of whom he had said to Selwin—

"If there were no other woman extant, if she were as beautiful as Helen, as rich as Croesus, she should never be my wife!"

Should she explain all now, and throw her—

self upon his mercy, or should she wait and then write to him? The face she turned towards him looked strangely white in the moonlight, and his heart sank with a sudden chill when he saw it.

"Mildred—speak quickly! don't keep me in suspense," he exclaimed, hoarsely; "can't you see that your silence is agony to me?"

He put both hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her eyes.

"Why are you so pale—have I startled you? Oh, darling, give me my answer now—at once!"

"I cannot!"

"Is it possible I have deceived myself in thinking you care for me, then?" he cried, hotly, and, pushing her away from him. "Have you been trifling with me, and are you as heartless a coquette as I once deemed the rest of your sex?"

Another moment, and rather than let him continue in such a belief, she would have confessed everything, but just then there came the sound of a boat's keel grating on the shingle, and Maud's merry laugh told she had returned. The opportunity was lost.

"Hush!" she said, hurriedly, "to-morrow morning I will give you an answer."

And with this he was forced to be content, for Miss Pedley advanced at that instant, uttering some trite remark concerning the fineness of the night; and with her presence was dissolved the spell of the moonlight silence, and the subtle charm that a sweeter alchemy than the moonlight had woven over the dewy landscape.

Mildred, too much agitated to join in the careless conversation of the others, went back to the cottage where Mr. Denver was smoking his solitary pipe in the garden. Maud presently followed her, guessing from her manner something of what had happened, and being too impatient to curb her anxiety to know what it really was. Thus Louise Pedley and Ingram were alone.

"This night reminds me of one nearly ten years ago, when you came to the Vicarage, and we stood looking at the brook," she said, softly, drawing a little nearer to him. "Do you remember it?"

"I remember a good many evenings spent at the Vicarage in a general sort of way, but hardly any one in particular."

"Women's memory of such matters is better than men's," with a little sigh.

"Do you think so?" he said, absently, looking not at her, but towards the cottage where he knew Mildred was, and she saw that, as a matter of fact, he hardly heard what she was saying, so preoccupied was his attention.

"Roland!" she exclaimed, with sudden vehemence, and carried away by the excitement of the moment from her ordinary calm; "is it possible that, after what happened in the past, you can speak to me thus coldly? Is it possible that we—you and I—can be strangers, when ten years ago we were all in all to each other?"

She had no reason to complain of lack of attention on his part now. He turned and faced her, his dark eyes flashing, a smile of unutterable scorn on his lips.

"And you remind me of that miserable time! Verily a woman's heart is an incomprehensible thing, and far beyond my power to probe. I should have thought that the one great effort of your life would have been to bury that wretched episode in deepest oblivion. Surely the part you played in it was bad enough!"

"You have always taken too harsh a view of it—you were merciless in your judgment. After all, my greatest fault lay in loving you better than what you called truth."

"No," he said, sternly, "it was not for love of me that you acted as you did; you would have married that other man you were engaged to at the same time if you had been sure he would inherit his uncle's fortune; and directly you found that was not likely to be the case you threw him over as heartlessly as if you had been made of stone instead of flesh

and blood. Luckily, I knew your treachery in time, and was saved from the consequences of a folly upon which I now look back with absolute disgust."

Hard words these, to be spoken to such overweening vanity as that of Louisa Pedley!

"If women only knew what a wrong they do their sex when they act as you acted," he went on, less vehemently. "For years the very name of woman was to me a synonym for all that was low, and mean, and base. Now, thank Heaven! I see my error, for I have found one who is pure and true to her heart's core, who does not even know the meaning of deceit, and whose soul is as clear and limpid as a well of crystal!"

She knew who he meant; she saw how his eyes softened in the sternness of their anger, and his whole countenance lighted up under the influence of the love that had become a part of his very being, and over her swept a wave of humiliation whose bitterness is indescribable.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHE turned upon him, almost fiercely. "You fool, you imbecile, to have been so easily tricked!" she cried out, unable to control herself, or to yield to the guidance of that prudence which she so rarely permitted to desert her. "Do you know who this ideal woman—this paragon of all the virtues—is?"

He looked at her in astonishment, not unmixed with disgust at such unfeminine language and demeanour, but he did not reply.

"You are speaking of her who has just left us, and whom you know under the name of Mildred Denver," she continued, with unabated excitement. "What if I should tell you she has fooled you more completely than you were ever in your life fooled, that she has deceived you in every way. As to her antecedents, her name, her character—that she is, in effect, a married woman?"

"You are mad," he said, contemptuously, turning on his heel, and walking towards the cottage.

"No, I am sane enough, it is you who have been beguiled of your senses. Stay, you shall hear me," she laid her hand on his sleeve, "for what I have to say is the truth, and I am willing to vouch for it before all the world. Why," with a mocking laugh, "she even wears a wedding-ring, only you have been too blinded by your infatuation to see it."

"It was her mother's, Maud Denver told me so."

"It may have been her mother's, but it was nevertheless placed on her finger by her husband. Shall I tell you who that husband was—your own cousin, Sir Rupert Ingram?"

If the earth had suddenly opened in front of him he could not have started back in greater horror and surprise. After a moment's silence he broke into an incredulous laugh. "What will you say next, I wonder?"

"I tell you Heaven's own truth. This woman is Mildred, Lady Ingram, and if you will confront me with her I will challenge her to deny it. Ask her, too, whether, when I met her at the Academy she did not implore me to keep silence regarding her identity, so as not to let you suspect who she was."

There was a certain ring of sincerity in Miss Pedley's voice that vouched for the veracity of her words, and the chill of an icy hand seemed to fall on her listeners' heart as he recognized it.

"Well," he said, rather unsteadily, "it is easy enough to put your accusation to the proof. Come indoors at once, and repeat it before Mildred and the Danvers, and then we shall see the result."

She obliged without hesitation. Her anger had hurried her into a course of action that she certainly had not the intention of pursuing in this precipitate manner, but having once begun she had no alternative but to go on, and make the best of her position.

"Where is Miss Mildred?" Ingram inquired of Mr. Denver when they reached the cottage.

"Upstairs with Maud, I believe. Do you want her?"

"For a few minutes! Please say I won't detain her long."

Mr. Denver went out to send a servant with the request, and Roland Ingram took up his station near the window, a terrible shadow on his face. What if this charge should be true, and the woman he loved prove his cousin's widow!

"But why should she assume this disguise—what motive could she possibly have for wishing to deceive me?" he muttered, unconsciously in his agitation that he was speaking aloud.

"That question is very easily answered!" replied Louisa Pedley. "I was at Ingram Chase when your cousin died, and although that last will of his was stolen, his widow was terribly afraid you would dispute the one under which she inherited the estates—the told me as much herself, and added that the only way to assure her own position would be a marriage with you. This idea was frustrated by the fact of your going away from Warwickshire without seeing her, and Mr. Selwin was at no pains to conceal the opinion you had formed of her conduct. Besides this, on the evening you came to the Chase, she was in the library listening to your conversation with the lawyer?"

"How do you know this?"

"Because I saw her go in just before you and he entered, and she was still there when Mr. Selwin returned. I learned from him that she had not made a third at your interview, consequently she must have been concealed somewhere in the room during the whole time."

"Then," said Ingram, slowly, "I understand you to mean that she had made up her mind to marry me, and when she met me down here she was conscious that a knowledge of who she was would instantly terminate our acquaintance, and therefore assumed a fictitious name in order to carry her plot to a successful issue?"

"Yes."

He looked impatiently towards the door, wondering why Mildred did not come. As a matter of fact she was waiting to bathe her face, and remove from it the traces of recent agitation, and wondering the while what could be the reason of this hasty summons.

"Personally, I have no dislike to Lady Ingram," went on Miss Pedley, biting her pale lips to infuse a little colour into them. "She was always kind to me while I was at Ingram Chase, and I did my best to repay her by keeping silence regarding a circumstance that could have made her position even more unpleasant than it was. Of course no one ever doubted that she took her husband's last will, although there were no proofs against her. My testimony, if it had been given, would have strengthened the evidence very materially, even if it had not been strong enough to convict her in a court of justice."

"Then why did you withhold it?"

"Because I was sorry for her, and—to my shame I confess it—I fancied your disinheritation was a sort of retribution on you for spurning me when I begged your forgiveness years ago."

His lip curled as he listened—to him she became more utterly despicable with every word that fell from her.

"And may I now ask the nature of this testimony that you kept back?" he said.

"Yes, I have no objection to your knowing it. On the night of Sir Rupert's death, and after Mr. Selwin and Dr. Cartwright had left him, I was just on the point of coming downstairs—I slept on the next floor—when I saw Lady Ingram going into his room. She only stayed about three minutes, and when she came out she had a paper in her hand. I went back to my chamber, thinking that if the patient had wanted anything his wife would have called me, and the circumstance would have left no impression on my memory but for after events, and the fact of Lady Ingram declaring that she never entered her husband's room from

the time she left Dr. Cartwright there till the moment of the baronet's death."

Miss Pedley had hardly finished speaking when the door opened, and Maud and Mildred entered—the latter very pale, and Maud herself not so insouciant as usual.

"We have received a formal summons from Captain Ingram to appear—at least, Mildred has, and I have come as a sort of bodyguard," she said, closing the door, and then turning up the gas, which had heretofore been rather low. "Is there anything serious the matter?" she added, in a different tone, on observing the expression of the soldier's face.

"Something very serious indeed," he answered, gravely, and his hand, as he put it up to stroke his moustache, was trembling. "I wish to ask a question on which the whole happiness of my life depends, and it is necessary that I should first state I do it under compulsion"—he looked across at Miss Pedley, who returned his glance with perfect steadiness.

"It concerns the lady I know as Miss Mildred Denver," he continued, "and the only right I can allege for demanding an answer is that I have asked her to become my wife. Miss Pedley has this evening informed me that I have been deceived with regard to her identity, and that she is, in reality, my cousin's widow, Lady Ingram."

After he ceased speaking there was an intense silence. To him it seemed like hours, although, in reality, it lasted but a few minutes. Then it became unbearable, and he went over to Mildred's side and caught her hands.

"Why are you silent? Why don't you contradict this?" he cried, with vehement passion. "You have only to say one word, and I will believe it, though all the world swore it was false! Mildred, Mildred, don't you understand what my love is, and that my faith is equally strong?"

She tore her hands from his grasp, and covered her face with them, her whole frame shaken by the violence of her emotion. He watched her, a curious gray pallor making itself visible through the bronze of his complexion.

"You see," observed Miss Pedley, with a triumphant sneer, "she is unable to deny the truth of my words."

"Is this so, Mildred? Are you indeed the woman who robbed me of my heritage?"

She uttered a low cry and flung herself at his feet.

"Not that—not that!" she cried. "I am your cousin's widow, and I confess I have allowed you wilfully to remain in ignorance of it, but it has been for a good purpose. If I have erred forgive me."

He stepped back, every drop of blood forsaking his face—white even to the lips. His agony was pitiful to witness. He had loved her so well, trusted her so implicitly, and now, by her own admission, she had deceived him. If one part of Louisa Pedley's story were true, it followed that the rest must be.

"Don't judge me yet—listen to my explanation of the causes that induced me to act as I have done!" she entreated, piteously, but he shook his head.

"Nothing that you could urge in extenuation would make any difference. I believed in you, and you have betrayed my faith—that admits of no justification, and it would only prolong a painful scene if you were to attempt it. I do not reproach you—I claim no right of any sort. I only return to a belief I held ten years ago—that all women are heartless coquettes who live simply for admiration, and would sell their souls—if they had any—for the sake of the gold they worship!"

Nothing could have exceeded the caustic bitterness of his words, or the scathing contempt lighting up his dark eyes, more hopeless far than the loudest denunciations. Mildred instinctively felt that any appeal would be as powerless to move him as an attempt to melt with tears a granite rock.

Maud Denver started forward, her cheeks flushed, her bosom heaving.

"Colonel Ingram, you have no right to say such things. If you must blame anyone let it be me, for it is my fault that this deception has been practised. Mildred only consented to it because I entreated her so strongly."

"You are quite right to try and defend your friend, Miss Denver, and I admire you for it, but I really think Lady Ingram is old enough and experienced enough to judge for herself, and so you must forgive me if I venture to doubt your word. Before I go I wish to thank you and your father for your kind hospitality, which I am afraid I shall have no opportunity of repaying, for I intend leaving England tomorrow, and probably shall never see its shores again. Good-bye, Lady Ingram. You need have no fear of any attempt being made on my part to wrest from you the money you have sinned so grievously to obtain."

He dare not look at her again, for at the sight of that fair, imploring face a great wave of love came rushing over him, impelling him to forget her baseness, her frailty—to remember only that she was the one woman in the world, and risk everything for the sake of holding her in his arms, pressing his lips against hers. The temptation was strong, but honour was stronger, and he conquered.

He went out into the moonlight like a man who flees from something that has a deadly terror for him, and never slackened his pace till he got back to his hotel. He tried to stifle thought, and to occupy himself only with his future plans, for reflection was maddening; but in spite of all his efforts it forced itself upon him, bringing every detail of his acquaintance with Mildred back to his memory with the most vivid distinctness. Much that had seemed obscure to him in the past—her reticence concerning herself, and utter silence regarding her former life—was so perfectly intelligible by the light of these later events, as well as that sentence of Maud's he had chanced to overhear when she said,—

"It would really be only a justifiable revenge on your part if you were to make him fall in love with you, and then laugh at him."

The meaning of the words was clear enough now. Well, between them they had fooled him to the top of his bent, and there was nothing left for him but to bear the consequence with the best grace he might, only he had loved her so, and the discovery of her unworthiness was bitterer than death itself.

The strong man who had faced so many foes with a laugh on his lips, and whose courage had become a proverb in his regiment, hid his face in his hands, and a groan that was almost a sob burst from him. Then he rose and stamped his foot angrily on the ground.

"She has made a fool of me, but that is no reason that I should make a fool of myself," he exclaimed, aloud. "I have still my profession left, and there is not a woman in the world worth breaking one's heart over."

Easy enough to say, but difficult to believe. Action of some sort was a necessity to him, so he packed his portmanteau, rang the bell, and ordered a dog-cart to be got ready, and then drove off in it towards London, where he arrived in the middle of the night, and went straight to the Charing Cross Hotel. Going to bed was of course out of the question, and the morning light found him pacing restlessly up and down his apartments, and only pausing every now and then to consult a "Bradshaw," and decide on what should be his route to Italy. His leave of absence had not yet expired, and he resolved to spend the interval roaming about the Continent and endeavouring to dull pain by constant change and excitement—whether he would succeed was a question he did not stay to consider. And so, the next morning, he went to Dover, and embarked from thence in the belief that this farewell to his native land was destined to be his last.

(To be continued.)

To the generous mind the heaviest debt is that of gratitude when it is not in our power to repay it.

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

(Continued from page 126.)

CHAPTER XVI.

Is the quiet of that sweet August evening Helena Stuart crept back to the stately home she had left so strangely. She had lived at Alandyke not quite three months. Already she had been away from it almost double the time of her sojourn there, and yet as she turned aside from the shrubbery to the door leading to the private staircase, it seemed to Nell that she was going home.

She never thought of what reception awaited her; the idea that scorn and contempt might be her portion never occurred to her. She knew that Sir Jocelyn and his sister-in-law were away; the nurse was now the paramount authority at Alandyke, and with her she had ever been a favourite. No fear that she would refuse to let her see the sick child who moaned for her.

Up the stairs she went slowly, and yet with a light, springing step, down the long passages till she came to the nursery door. She opened it noiselessly and crept in. Already the shadow of coming trouble rested on the whilom cheerful room. Mab had been hastily removed at first thought of her sister's danger. Adela's white bed stood alone in the spot where the twin cribs had been. The nurse sat in a low chair near it; a table full of all the paraphernalia attendant on illness was at the foot of the bed, and by it stood an elderly man—no other than the medical celebrity of the district—who had been summoned in hot haste from Wharton.

As in a dream afterwards Nell remembered to have noticed all this at the time. She saw but one face—the white, pinched, childish face she had known so rosy and joyous, which lay so wearily on the pillows, the dark eyes open as though waiting, as though expecting someone.

"I want father!" Nell heard the little voice say, plaintively. "Why doesn't he come? I want him badly."

"He will come, dear," said the nurse, bending over her. "He will come soon."

"I want him now," said Adela, sadly. "He'd bring dear Miss Stuart!" the dark eyes turned to the doctor. "He said we should never see her again. But don't you think he'd send her now I am so ill?"

The doctor turned to the nurse irritably enough.

"Why haven't you sent for the young lady? Don't you see it might save the child's life? No father in the world would deny a child's wish when she was so ill as this!"

"I'd send directly, doctor, if I could," replied the nurse, meekly; "but no one knows where Miss Stuart is. There's many say she's dead. I believe the master thinks so himself."

There was a movement. A little figure stood at nurse's side—a little creature in a plain black dress (she had taken off the scarlet shawl before she entered the sick room), her soft brown hair curling in short rings on her forehead.

"I have come back," she said, simply. "You will let me stay with Adela, won't you, nurse? I don't think Sir Jocelyn would mind. I can go away directly she is better."

But before the nurse could answer the question seemed settled. At first sound of that well-remembered voice a change passed over the face of the little patient. She put out her arms, and as Nell went forward and gathered the child to her heart those who stood by knew that had they wished it ever so the commonest humanity would prevent their parting the girl and the little child who clung to her in such boundless love. Five minutes more and the dark eyes closed peacefully—the refreshing sleep the doctor had almost despaired of had come at last.

He looked at the nurse, and she followed him into the outer room. There was a strange mistiness about her eyes.

"Who is that young lady?"
 "Miss Stuart, sir. She was governess here in the spring. The master took a dislike to her, and she disappeared."
 "Disappeared?"

"Aye, sir! I was the last person who saw her. I met her on the stairs one evening in March, and she told me she was going to get some air in the garden. From that night to this I have never seen her."

"She has been ill, probably. She looks very delicate."

"Yes, sir; now you mention it I can see she's altered. She's thinner, and her beautiful hair has been cut short."

"You have heard from Lady Daryl?"

"My lady is not coming, sir. She says she is not used to illness, and could do no good. We telegraphed to the master; I think the housekeeper sent it off two days ago. I know we calculated he might be here to night. But, there; if he's too late, he'd better not have come. Miss Adela is just the light of his eyes."

"I don't think he will be too late. This sleep may do wonders. If the child rallies Miss Stuart will have saved her life."

"Nurse hesitated."

"And you don't think the master'll be hard on me, sir, for disobeying him?"

"Disobeying him?"

"Before she left Alandyke he told me Miss Stuart was not to see the children again. The master's a hard man, sir. He sent away the old nurse, who had brought up Lady Alberta from a baby, just because she crossed his rules. He's never let poor Goody cross the threshold since. And she loved the little ladies dearly, for their mother's sake."

"I will take all blame!" said the Doctor, shortly. "He must have strange ideas to object to Miss Stuart. She looks little more than a child herself."

"They went back to the nursery, but the little invalid still slept peacefully."

"You will be cramped to death," said Dr. Gates, to Nell; "and yet if you leave her she may wake, and this sleep is her only chance."

"I will stay," she answered, in a sweet, low voice.

The doctor fetched an eider-down quilt of some vivid, scarlet hue and spread it over the two. He placed a chair so as to support Nell's tired feet. And then he looked at them; and at a man little given to such fancies, thought what a picture they would have made for an artist—the two faces on the one pillow, so alike in their delicate beauty, so great a contrast in all else. Adela's long, dark hair fell over Nell's shoulder, hiding her black dress; indeed, all of the little governess which the bright quilt left visible was her gentle face and small, lily-white hand.

"You had better not go in again," he said to nurse. "It only risks waking the child. Miss Stuart can call you if she rouses. For my part I should advise you to go to bed. You've been up two nights, and must need rest."

It was past two. The doctor had announced his intention of remaining till morning; so nurse thought she might venture on obeying his advice. And she went off to lay down by Mab, whose flushed, rosy cheeks and regular breathing contrasted so greatly with her sister's.

Barely half-an-hour, and a hushed sound was heard through that anxious household. Dr. Gates distinguished the noise of wheels, the opening of the grand entrance. He knew by instinct that Sir Jocelyn had arrived, and he went downstairs to meet him. They were old acquaintances, for Dr. Gates had attended Lady Alberta in her last illness. It struck him, as he looked at the baronet's stern-set face, that his child's danger moved him more heavily even than his mother's loss.

"I suppose it is over?" said Sir Jocelyn. "I am too late, and you have come to break it to me."

"I should not have hurried to bring you such news," replied the physician, cheerfully. "There is a change for the better this even-

ing. Your child is asleep, and this sleep may be the saving of her life."

"Are you sure it is not the sleep of death?"

"I am positive."

Sir Jocelyn sank into a chair.

"I have travelled night and day since the news reached me. I thought she was doomed—that the curse of those who despoil the fatherless had fallen on her."

"My dear sir," inexpressibly shocked, "what can you be thinking of? Your child's danger has set you dreaming."

Sir Jocelyn shook his head.

"It is quite true," he said, slowly. "For five weary years I have feared the curse, and I always knew it would fall on Adela, since she was my elder child—the heiress of Alandyke as they called her in mockery."

(To be continued.)

FACETIÆ.

"WHAT is a house without a baby?" asked a lady writer, and an old bachelor editor replied, "It is comparatively quiet."

A GENTLEMAN having objected to his wife's attending a public ball, she snappishly said:—"I'll go if I see fit." "Very well; but you'll see fit if you go!" was the crusty reply.

ONE of the sufferers by a late railway accident was rushing wildly about, when someone asked if he was hurt. "No," he said, "but I can't find my umbrella."

A MAKER of musical instruments, having just finished a double bass, rubbed his hands with satisfaction, but on standing the instrument on end he heard a rattling noise, and looking through one of the apertures, he ruefully exclaimed: "What a fool I am! I've left the glue-pot inside!"

A LITTLE girl sat gazing fixedly at the new bonnet of one of her mother's visitors until the caller smilingly asked: "Do you like it, my dear?" The child innocently replied: "Yes, I do. Mamma and Aunt Milly said it was a perfect fright, but it doesn't frighten me a bit."

A FEW days ago two persons were heard disputing as to the meaning of the word "lampoon." The one accused the other of never having heard of the word before. "What! Do you think I have never heard of lampooning whales?" was the reply.

"POOR man!" exclaimed a physician, as he approached the patient's bed, he seems to be suffering from neuralgia." "You're mistaken," said the sick man. "Her name isn't neuralgia; it's Sophia, and we've only been married six months."

A SCHOOL inspector asked a small pupil of what the surface of the earth consists, and was promptly answered, "Land and water." He varied the question slightly, that the fact might be impressed on the boy's mind, and asked, "What then do land and water make?" To which came the immediate response, "Mud."

A MAN with a discoloured eye, upon being asked what had occasioned the marks, replied in the following pregnant sentences: "Bruce had recourse to the sword, Tell to a bow and arrow; but when a woman strikes for liberty she uses anything she can lay her hands on. Flat-irons are the handiest things in our house!"

THE notion that language is a device to conceal thoughts finds its parallel in the idea that bad writing is practised by certain persons to hide their orthography. "Your handwriting is very bad indeed," said a gentleman to a college friend, who was more addicted to boasting and cricketering than hard study; "you really ought to learn to write better." "Aye, aye," responded the young man. "It's all very well for you to tell me that; but if I were to write better, people would be finding out how I spell."

A MAN having written to another in a rage, and called him an ass, the maligned man wrote back and signed his note, "Yours, fraternally!"

A THEOLOGICAL student recently advertised: "A pious young man wishes to obtain a home in a respectable private family, where his moral deportment will be considered an equivalent for his board and lodging. References required."

THE DEAREST SPOT.—"My dear," said a sentimental wife, "home, you know, is the dearest spot on earth." "Well, yes," said the practical husband, "it does cost about twice as much as any other spot."

"TELL your mistress that I have torn the curtain," said a gentleman to the chambermaid of his lodging-house. "Very well, sir; missis will put it down to the rent."

RATHER MIXED.—A temperance lecturer lately said: "Would you believe, fellow-citizens, that a woman died near where I was speaking on Thursday evening in a horrible state of intoxication?"

"DON'T you think your new schoolmaster is a great boon?" said a lady to a sharp little boy. He scratched his head a moment, and then brightening up, he said: "A boon? O, yes, a ba-boon!"

A YOUNG widow was asked why she was going to wed so soon after the death of her first husband. "Oh, la!" said she, "I do it to prevent fretting myself to death on account of dear Tom!"

THE famous French painter David made one of his pictures for the salon with the figure of a magnificent prancing horse. It was all the rage. One day, as David passed along the gallery, he saw a sturdy farmer laughing heartily at the picture. "What are you laughing at?" inquired the painter. "I am thinking of the imbecile who drew that horse," replied the farmer. "Only a fool," he observed, "would be ignorant of the fact that a horse never foams unless he has a bit in his mouth." David had the picture taken down.

"SEE here, sir," said a philanthropist to a seedy-looking tramp. "This is the third time you have asked for help this week." "I know it." "There is no need of any one getting so low down as you seemed to have reached. I was careful early in life to keep something laid by for a rainy day. I don't see why other people can't do the same thing, and live within their means." "It is easy enough to advise people to live within their means," replied the tramp; "but the trouble is to find the means to live within. That's what I'm after now." He got another shilling.

A DARING robbery was perpetrated the other day in a grocer's shop. A stranger asked the apprentice, who was alone in the shop, for a pound of treacle. When the young man asked what he should put it in, the stranger took off his hat and told him to put it into that. The unsuspecting apprentice smilingly complied, but he had scarcely filled the hat when it was suddenly clapped on his head. The stranger then proceeded to clear out the till. The poor apprentice, who had great difficulty in getting rid of the hat and the sticky matter which covered his face, shouted for help, but the robber by this time had got clear away.

"FISHING FOR COMPLEMENTS."—Mercury wished very much to know in what estimation he was held by men. He concealed his godhead, and went to a sculptor. Here he saw a statue of Jupiter, and asked the artist what was the price of it.—"A drachma," was the answer. Mercury laughed.—"And this time?"—"About the same." At last he saw his own image, and thought to himself, "I am the messenger of the gods; all gain comes from me; men must put a high value on me.—And this god here" pointing to his own image—"how dear is he?"—"That one?" said the artist. "Why, if you buy the other two, you shall have that one into the bargain." Mercury took himself off.

SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN will remain in Scotland until nearly the end of June. Ascot falls rather later than usual this year, and for years past Her Majesty has made it a rule to keep away from Windsor during the race week. Some surprise is expressed almost every year by people who do not know the motives that govern so many actions of the Court that the Queen does not put the Castle at the disposal of the Prince of Wales for Ascot. The Queen, they may rest assured, has reason for not breaking through her rules.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH, accompanied by Captain Fellowes, landed at Portsmouth Dockyard on Tuesday, May 13. His Royal Highness left for Victoria by the ordinary 11 A.M. train, to which a saloon carriage was attached. The Duke arrived at Clarence House, St. James's, and then proceeded to the Admiralty. His Royal Highness left town in the evening to join the Duchess at Eastwell Park.

ON Wednesday, May 14, at the Oratory, Brompton, was solemnized the marriage of Mr. Charles Weld-Blundell, of Ince Hall, Lancashire, with Charlotte Catherine Marcia, eldest daughter of the late Hon. Charles P. d'Arcy Lane-Fox. The ceremony took place at eleven o'clock, the bride arriving punctually at that hour with Mr. George Lane-Fox, who afterwards gave her away. She was met just inside the entrance of the church by her eight bridesmaids, and the bridal procession passed at once to the space in front of the sanctuary, where the bridegroom, accompanied by his brother, Mr. Henry Weld-Blundell, as best man, awaited the bride.

The bride's dress was extremely handsome. It was composed of rich cream-white satin, made with a very long train; the lace tablier sparkled with crystal bead embroidery, and the bodice was trimmed with orange blossoms. A wreath of the same flowers was covered by a fine tulle veil; and her ornaments, which were of pearls and diamonds, included a splendid diamond necklace and pendant. The bridesmaids looked well in pretty dresses of cream French cashmere and wide Edelweiss lace, with cream-satin hats and feather aigrettes to match. Each wore a gold double horseshoe brooch, the gift of the bridegroom, and carried a bouquet of red and white flowers.

The wedding of the Hereditary Prince of Anhalt to Princess Elizabeth of Hesse (not the Darmstadt family) at Rumpenheim will, it is said, be attended by the Empress of Russia, the Kings and Queens of Greece and Denmark, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Grand Duke and Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Grand Duke of Hesse, the Prince of Bulgaria, and the Duke and Duchess of Nassau.

The culminating event of the Dublin season was the Fancy Ball given by Mrs. Vincent Jackson, on May 9, in her town residence, Marlborough-square. This residence, lately the mansion of the Right Hon. Viscount Gort, has, since its acquisition by its present owner, been beautifully refitted and furnished, and was filled by a brilliant and fashionable crowd of over four hundred persons.

The costumes were varied, and conspicuous; among them was that of the hostess, who appeared as the Queen of Diamonds, in a dress of white and gold brocade, sparkling with gems.

A wonderful "make up" was that of Miss Layard, who personated the Assyrian Priestess of Nimrock. This dress, which was somewhat like an animated Egyptian mummy, was copied from the well-known coloured illustration in Layard's *Nineveh*, all the hieroglyphic symbols being faithfully and minutely reproduced in hand-painting. She wore the Assyrian headdress and a complete set of Assyrian jewellery, taken from a tomb near Nineveh, and which possibly may have been worn at some ball under the shadow of the Tower of Babel three thousand years ago.

STATISTICS.

HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE. The thirty-five millions of British people annually consume upwards of 300,000,000 quatern leaves, 93,000,000 cwt. of potatoes, 17,000,000 cwt. of vegetables, 30,000,000 cwt. of meat, 700,000,000 lbs. of fish, 5,000,000 cwt. of butter, 2,000,000,000 lbs. of sugar, 170,000,000 lbs. of tea, 1,000,000,000 gallons of beer, 37,000,000 gallons of spirits, and 14,000,000 gallons of wine, the total cost to the consumers being about £500,000,000, or if we take the net or national expenditure about £349,000,000. Within the last forty years there has been an enormous increase in the consumption of articles of food and drink in the United Kingdom. Next to the expenditure for food and drink comes the expenditure on articles of dress, principally consisting in cotton, wool, linen, and silk, in boots, shoes, and hats, as well as in gold and silver ornaments and jewellery, involving an expenditure of well-nigh £148,000,000 gross, or £123,000,000 net or real value. The house expenditure comprises about £72,000,000 for house rent, some £11,000,000 for furniture, estimating only the value of annual additions, £15,000,000 for coal, £14,000,000 for gas, and £5,000,000 for water, making in all £17,000,000. Then there is the expenditure in tobacco, amounting to some £13,000,000 gross, but only £3,000,000 net value. And after this there are expenses for education, literature, newspapers, church and chapel, charity, amusements, travelling, taxes, and cost of distribution, the grand total being £880,000,000 gross, and £683,000,000 net per annum.—*Leisure Hour*.

GEMS.

A MAN'S wisdom is his best friend, folly his worst enemy.

FURY runs most furiously when a guilty conscience drives it.

ONE ungrateful man does an injury to all who stand in need of aid.

JEALOUSY is the sentiment of poverty, but envy is the instinct of theft.

IT is not cowardly to yield to necessity, nor courageous to stand out against it.

TO what slight and poor beginnings may not the greatest results be traced back, even by our own imperfect knowledge!

FINE feelings, without vigour of reason, are in the situation of the extreme feathers of a peacock's tail—dragging in the mud.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRUIT-EATING.—The proper time for eating fruits of every description is half-an-hour before breakfast and dinner; and if in their ripe, raw, natural, and fresh state, the acid which their juices contain, and which is their healthful quality, is at once absorbed and carried in its strength into the circulation.

TO PREPARE AN EGG FOR AN INVALID.—Beat an egg to a froth; add seasoning to the taste; then steam until thoroughly warmed through, but not hardened. This will take about two minutes. An egg prepared in this way will not distress even a very sensitive stomach.

HUNTINGDON PUDDING.—One pint of milk and half a teaspoonful of rice, put into a tin and set in a pot nearly half full of boiling water; keep the water boiling until the rice is steamed soft enough to yield when pressed with the thumb and finger; then add the yolks of two eggs, a small lump of butter, and the grated rind of a lemon; turn into a pudding-dish, beat the whites to a stiff froth, and stir in three ounces of sugar and the juice of the lemon; spread this frosting on the pudding, and put into the oven to brown.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FLUIDS AND FAT.—The removal of surplus fat from the body by appropriate means naturally forms a subject of interest to the well-to-do classes. Various modifications of solid diet having had their day, the consumption of fluids is now undergoing regulation in respect of quantity among those who find their own presence insupportable. There is something in this theory, inasmuch as liquids, merely as such, materially aid the digestion and absorption of the food with which they are taken. Again, several of the fluids in most common use are, directly or indirectly, fat-forming. Thus cocoa contains a very large proportion of fat, coffee a considerable amount along with amyloid substances, which are also represented in tea to a much smaller extent, and which readily pass by chemical decomposition into the form of fat. Beer, wine, and spirit are all fattening, partly in consequence of their saccharine and starchy constituents, and partly from their tendency to hinder excretion of waste products of food, and, when acting on any but a languid frame, to hurry and to stir that methodical oxidation by the blood on which the maintenance of sound tissue depends. General opinion, we are sure, will bear us out in saying that when the solids consumed are moderate in amount and digestible, and when the fluid is merely fluid, not fatty or amyloid in its composition, and not stimulant, free drinking will not influence obesity. We can call to mind heavy drinkers of water and regular consumers of tea, moderate in diet otherwise, whose habits engendered not the slightest tendency to corpulence. We should without hesitation recommend their practice to the stout, and should rely for the reduction of their bulk not on any further alteration of their diet, which might easily be carried so far as to starve their more important tissues, but on the maintenance of regular and sufficient physical exercise.—*Lancet*.

MOUERING FLOWERS.—Curious indeed is the part which flowers are made to play in our ceremonialism; but if they have been held essential to the proper observance of the marriage rites, when joy is supposed to reign triumphant, we now see them in death, emblems of profound sorrow. Never previously, perhaps, have flowers formed a more prominent feature in the obsequies of death than was evidenced in Paris, on the occasion of the funeral of that distinguished man who was among the most illustrious of French statesmen. When we read of three huge waggons loaded of floral devices, and even larger quantities carried by the numerous deputations in the procession, we may well ask whether modern public funerals are not in danger of becoming transformed into popular celebrations at the shrine of Flora. It was computed that two hundred and fifty thousand francs were spent for flowers on the Boulevards alone, and that even more than that sum was expended in the flower market and amongst the gardeners in the environs of Paris; one wealthy man spent four thousand francs in Corsica, and the greenhouses of opulent bourgeois were made to furnish an immense quota. Then, and not least, the gardens of Nice were shorn of their flowers, which were sent by express to Paris that they might help swell in mountains of wreaths and bouquets the great volume of French mourning and sorrow. The French are a volatile people, and when they grieve they do so in masses and with profound intensity, just as when they rejoice they do so exuberantly. Englishmen, too, can mourn their illustrious dead, but though they make flowers emblems of grief, respect and profound feeling, they will, we trust, never convert a public funeral into a monster floral demonstration. For that and similar reasons, perhaps, France may just now prove a more profitable Elysium for flower-growers than England is, but perhaps with us the demand for flowers, if less impulsive, is more enduring and discriminative.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. P.—The specific named is patented.
B. W.—We cannot help you in the matter.
T. A. A.—Musical critics are not agreed upon the subject.
V. F.—We have no confidence in any concern of the kind named.

C. B.—Charles Reade, the recently-deceased novelist, was born in 1814.

T. C. D.—We have no personal knowledge of the company named.

C. B. M.—We can find no work of the kind.

L. AND M.—We do not encourage flirtation in any form.

B. C.—The population of Vienna, Austria-Hungary, in 1890, was 1,103,857.

B. R.—It is optional with the bride and groom to wear gloves or not.

B. G.—To make birdlime, boil the best linseed oil for some hours, until it becomes a viscid paste. Birdlime may be procured at any bird-fanciers.

ALVA.—1. Glycerine and lemon juice will soften and whiten the skin. 2. Good Friday, in 1893, fell on April 3rd.

W. M.—It would be very wrong and very foolish for you to accept any man through fear of remaining unmarried. Your mother can give you good advice on this subject.

G. V. S.—You cannot marry again until you first obtain a divorce from your husband. If your account of him is correct you can easily obtain a divorce.

C. B.—1. We know of no recipe that would serve your purpose. 2. We can form no estimate of the value of such an article, nor can we suggest anything practicable in relation to it.

ELLIE.—Persevere in your efforts to get your boy to learn a trade or business of some kind. Once interested in his occupation, he would undoubtedly do well.

C. P.—1. There is nothing that will prevent the growth of superfluous hair. 2. If it is removed it will grow again, and be thicker and coarser than before. Let it alone.

T. L.—We have nothing to suggest to you. Our advice is to consult your parents before taking so important a step. If you do not, a life of misery may be your punishment.

S. P. Y.—If you are discreet and constant you will gain the consent of your parents. You are too young yet to think of marriage. A couple of years will solve all your troubles.

ALICE G.—No one can compel you to marry without your consent. Your situation is a very trying one. When a mistake is once made it is hard to retrieve it. You can hold property in your maiden name.

CAREY.—The *Lancet* informs a correspondent that "the possibility, may the certainty in many cases, of flies being a medium of infection, especially in warm climates, has been repeatedly pointed out, though perhaps the fact is not sufficiently borne in mind."

E. W. W.—The album of the Bank of England in which specimens of counterfeiters are preserved has three notes which passed through the Chicago fire. Though they are burnt to a crisp, black ash, the paper is scarcely broken, and the engraving is as clear as now.

W. S. D.—We know of nothing that will prevent the trouble of which you complain, except constant care to keep the cells or cups of the bakery clean. If the sediment to which you refer is allowed to accumulate, it will be found impossible to remove it without injury to the cells.

A. M. G.—To make blacking without polishing, take of treacle, four ounces; lampblack, half an ounce; yeast, a tablespoonful; eggs, two; olive oil, a teaspoonful; turpentine, a teaspoonful. Mix well. Apply with a sponge, without polishing.

P. H. M.—To extract grease from stone or marble, take of soft soap, one part; Fuller's earth, two parts; potash, one part. Mix with boiling water. Lay the surface on the spots, and let it remain for a few hours.

FRED.—You are none too old to marry a young lady of twenty, and we advise you to press your suit with courage and discretion. Do not neglect any of those agreeable attentions which render a man acceptable to a lady. When a man goes a-wooing, he should give himself a holiday, and assume holiday attire and manners; above all, take the earliest good opportunity of proposing. Girls like a man who knows his own mind.

ALBAN H.—The few squares that existed in London antecedent to 1770 were rather sheep-walks, paddocks and kitchen-gardens than anything else. Grosvenor-square, fenced with a wooden railing, which was interrupted by lumpish brick piers at intervals, partook more of the character of a pond than a park; and as for Hanover-square, it had very much the air of a sorry cow-yard, where rough-assembled daily, playing at hussle up to their ankles in mire. Cavendish-square was then for the first time dignified with a

statue, in the modern uniform of the Guards, mounted on an antique charger richly gilt and burnished; and Red Lion-square, evidently so called from the sign of an ale shop at the corner, presented the anomalous appendages of ill-constructed watch-houses at either end, with an ungainly naked obelisk in the centre, which, by-the-by, was understood to be the site of Oliver Cromwell's reinvestment. St. James's Park abounded in apple trees, which Peppe mentions having laid under contribution by stealth, while Charles and his Queen were actually walking within sight of him.

W. D.—In the circumstances in which you are placed you should be very reserved and discreet. Your mother is your best adviser, and it is your duty to tell her all. If you act with the assistance of your parents, your happiness will be secured.

B. M.—Do not act hastily. There are still sixteen months to elapse before your betrothed will claim his bride, and you may discover that you are more deeply in love than you suppose. Young people are often mistaken in their estimate of their affections.

HATTIE.—As your beau is very young, and without the means to marry, do not encourage him, especially as his parents do not favour an early marriage. It would be better to retain your freedom and accept other company, as the chances of your marrying the young man in question do not appear to us to be very great.

L. H.—The female portion of the population of the globe is estimated to be somewhat greater than the male. Statistics of civilized countries show that there is a slightly greater number of births of females than of males. Some authorities place the number as high as ten, others as low as one per cent.

TRUE AS THE CHANGELESS STARS.

We have plighted our vows of love,
And the solemn pledge is given,
And the angel of our lives
Hath written those words in Heaven.
We may not know the fate
The future years shall bring,
But we need not fear the worst,
While to our love we cling.

Our hearts and our lives are joined
With a bond so strong and sure,
Let fate be dark or fair,
It will for aye endure.
For, true as the changeless stars
That spangle the arch of night,
Our love, so warm and pure,
Shall beam for ever bright.

F. E. H.

F. W.—1. Black and white are as fashionable as anything, because both make a good background. 2. Peacocks' eyes or feathers are mingled with fine flowers or ostrich feather pompons for millinery garniture. Wheat, oats, grasses, and mushrooms are also profusely used, while humming birds and butterflies are wired to have the effect of hovering over brilliant blossoms.

W. F. H.—Terra cotta is a soft, porous kind of earthenware, much made into ornaments. It is sometimes, but not usually, glazed. Many busts and little statues are made of it. It was employed by the ancient Greeks and Egyptians in the manufacture of statuary and other objects. The colour is usually a red or buff. The Romans also used it, moulding it into lamps, urns, &c. It is an important manufacture in England and France.

F. L.—1. To make cream cakes, take half-a-pint of boiling water, one pint of flour mixed well together with a quarter of a-pound of butter, and six eggs beaten light. Bake the cakes as usual to fill them with the custard when they are done. Another recipe is this:—One pound of sifted flour, one pound of sugar, half-a-pint of cream, five eggs beaten light, one wine-glassful of mixed wild, rose water, one nutmeg, one teaspoonful of salaratus in a cup of cream. Mix the eggs with the creamed butter and sugar, and the cream, and then the flour. Put in the salaratus last.

CISBY.—Why not speak to your parents and get them to assist you in ascertaining the young gentleman's intentions? This is the proper thing to do. Girls are very foolish to allow young men to monopolize their attention for any time, without a distinct engagement with the full knowledge and consent of their parents. In this way they often lose excellent opportunities. Do not tolerate these dangers. Nineteen is young enough to marry. Twenty is a better age for a girl. The beauty of a high or low forehead is a matter of taste. Some like a high forehead, because it is supposed to indicate a superior intellect.

A. M. F.—In order to earn money, it is necessary to know how to do or make something of value to others. If you are at school, we do not think that you can spare the time or obtain the work by which to make the money needed. Think over your abilities and accomplishments, and see if you cannot improve in some of them. Some girls can sew, crochet, knit, trim bonnets, make lace, embroider, make shirts, coats, wash, and iron, and perform all kinds of light housework. You had better ask your mother if you cannot assist her in some way, and thus earn the money. Do not try to keep anything a secret from your mother.

F. S. T.—A very suitable and becoming dress for a young lady would be one made of white plain and broadened crepe de chine. The basque of the plain material, with a hanging loose vest of the broadened crepe, edged around with Oriental lace, over which falls a fringe of pearl drops, with a tiny shell at the top of

each, and caught at one side with Ottoman bands. The back also was trimmed with lace, with pearl drops, and the sleeves were puffed at the lower edge. The underskirt was of the plain material, with a sounce edged with Oriental lace, over which fell the pearl drops. The long, full black drapery was of the plain goods, while the front and sides were covered with the wide sashes of the brocade, placed one under the other, and high at the left side, they also being trimmed with the lace and pearls.

ESSA.—Friends and relatives are expected to call first. It is customary for friends and relatives of the newly-married couple to be invited by cards to call on certain reception days. At a dancing-party all the guests are privileged to speak and dance without the formality of an introduction, although it is customary for the hostess to introduce those who are strangers to each other. Your write very well.

P. C. J.—1. The article to which you refer is said to be very beneficial, though we do not recommend it or any other cosmetic. 2. We know of nothing that will cure redness of the nose. 3. The colour of the lips received is light brown. 4. Your letters are well formed, but the writing is much too heavy. 5. Yes; you could improve your handwriting greatly by constant practice, by the aid of a copy-book.

C. L. S.—You certainly have some reason to complain, but probably the young lady is guilty of neglect and carelessness only. She is probably very much diverted and engrossed in the society of her friends, who naturally are doing everything in their power to please her. She will explain everything to your satisfaction on her return. At any rate, do not act rashly.

ALBA R.—We do not exactly understand your question, but give at a venture the following recipe:—To make common cider good for years, take the cider, when you think it will suit your taste, and put it into a quarter of a-pound of hops; then put the bag with the hops into the kettle with the cider, and tie it fast to the handle so that the bag with the hops will not touch the bottom of the kettle; scum off the cider while you have it on the fire, and after it has boiled a short time take it off the fire, and let it cool down lukewarm; put it into a good sweet barrel, and add one pint of good brandy, bung it up, and it will keep the same as you put it into your barrel for years.

C. E. G.—1. To make chocolate cake, take one cupful of sugar, two eggs, half a cupful of butter, half a cupful of sweet milk, two cupfuls of flour, half a teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar. To make the chocolate for the cake take one and a half cupfuls of brown sugar, one tablespoonful of butter, a tablespoonful of flour, one teaspoonful of treacle, a quarter of a teaspoonful of soda. Let these ingredients boil for fifteen minutes, and then stir in half a cake of chocolate; boil until thick; flavour with vanilla, put it between the layers of the cake when it is cold. 2. In your monogram you can use either of the letters referred to, or both. It is simply an abbreviation of a name.

ROSE EMMA.—1. It would be advisable to have no further dealings with a man possessing so little gallantry towards the fair sex. Visit your friend, and should you meet the objectionable party, treat him with frigid politeness. Do not judge the sterner sex by this man, as there is doubtless many a young man in your circle of acquaintance who would be proud to call you his wife. 2. We can recommend no method by which superfluous hair may be removed except by plucking it out. 3. The money might be placed in a savings' bank where it will bear interest, or invested in city or government securities. 4. The look of hair is of a light-brown colour. 5. You did perfectly right in refusing to allow undue familiarity, and the man should honour you for it.

MINA.—The colours you wear have a great deal to do with your apparent size. Thus, stout people dressed in black and dark hues look smaller, both in the street and in the house; and the dimensions of small people are so decreased that they appear like fairies and dwarfs. The optical effect of white and light colours is to enlarge all objects, and make a stout woman who does them almost mountainous in her outlines; but she need not, for this reason, look dingy or dull, for the rich dark hues offered to her for selection are numberless. Greens and blues, in their various shades, are better than reds, giving an effect of repose and distance.

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